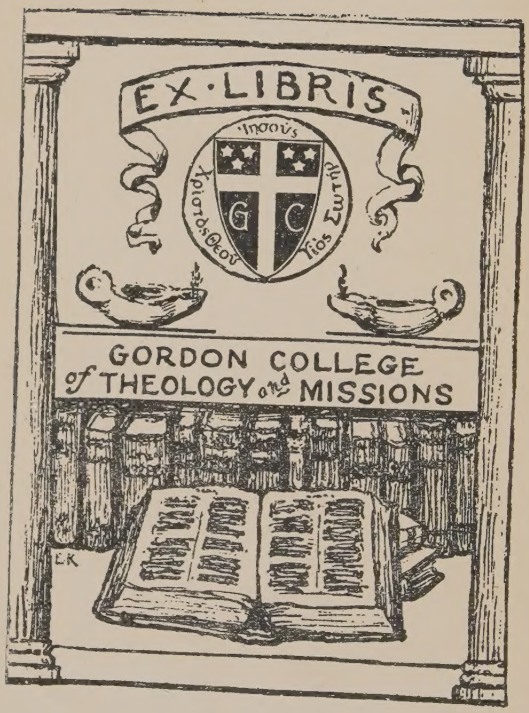
Christ is All

H. C. G. Moule

Preachers of The Age



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Preachers of the Age

H. C. G. MOULE, M.A.

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CHRIST IS ALL:

SERMONS FROM NEW TESTAMENT TEXTS ON VARIOUS ASPECTS OF THE GLORY AND WORK OF CHRIST

WITH SOME OTHER SERMONS

BY

H. C. G. MOULE, M.A.

PRINCIPAL OF RIDLEY HALL, AND FORMERLY FELLOW OF TRINITY COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE

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PREFACE

THE Sermons here before the reader are a collection, from some points of view, quite miscellaneous. Only two of them were preached consecutively. In time, the earliest produced are divided from the latest by several years. As to place, they represent much variety; some are parochial sermons, preached in two or three churches in which the writer has served; others are sermons for College Chapel or University Church. The cast and style, accordingly, will be seen to vary not a little from sermon to sermon, and so will the length. And no attempt has been made so to remodel what was first written as to avoid all repetitions of topic or argument.

The writer hopes, however, that the sermons grouped under the title, *Christ is All*, will be found not to be a mere accidental concourse, but to have a real coherence, bound together by those different aspects of the preacher's supreme and inexhaustible Theme of which they presume to treat. And those discourses which follow, and which have no such link in a professed common subject, will yet, it is hoped, be found to contribute something to "the consideration of HIM" who is our Hope, our Message, and our All.

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If the volume, such as it is, may in the least degree, by His mercy, point the reader's faith, even in one particular, more definitely to Him, and open up however little of His glory to the reader's love and adoration, it will be to the writer occasion for deep thanksgiving.

Ingleton, Kirkby Lonsdale,
August 26, 1892.

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Preached in London.

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CHRIST OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS

Preached in London

"My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous: and He is the Propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."—1 JOHN ii. 1, 2.

LET us think together to-day concerning the Lord Jesus Christ as the believer's Righteousness. And let us do so with full remembrance of the holiness of the theme. One of the first duties, one of the deepest instincts, of the Christian, in face of any great truth concerning his Lord and Redeemer, and especially in face of such truths as pointedly remind him of his own character as a sinner saved by grace, surely is to veil the face of the soul, to bow down in inward awe and adoration, and humbly to ask of the holy King and Master such grace and guidance as that the man may in some sense truly set HIM forth. So I not only announce my subject and proceed to deal with it; I ask your prayers; I beg you to accompany me in prayer, remembering Him of whom we speak, and who looks and listens as we confer together about Him.

Let me read my text again: "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the

Righteous: and He is the Propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."

The passage is brief, but divinely full. Within its sacred limits will move almost all the thoughts and reasonings that I shall have to put before you.

In pondering the subject, I have sought to do two things—to consider its limits, and to simplify my treatment. To speak first of this last point—I desire to aim at *simplicity* of treatment, by aiming at the heart and centre of the subject, and not at accessories and details on which there may be room for minor variations among believers otherwise thoroughly agreed. My words to you will concentrate themselves, God helping, only and wholly upon some few great facts and considerations, which to me seem to constitute that heart and centre. And then to speak of the *limits* of the subject—I wish to remember, and I ask you to remember, that in the phrase, "Christ our Righteousness," as commonly understood in the Churches of the Reformation, we have not only the doctrine of the Atonement implied, we have a certain special aspect and application of that holy doctrine. Disengaged from detail, in the way I hinted at a moment ago, the truth of "Christ our Righteousness" may, as to its centre, be stated somewhat thus: Jesus Christ in His atoning merits, Jesus Christ for me a sinner, is my immediate ground, is my one real ground, of peace with God, not only at first, but always, to the end. For His blessed sake as my sinless Sacrifice of peace, I, believing, am welcomed to the refuge, to the hiding-place, to the home, which is, in fact, Himself—Himself my Head and Lord. For His blessed sake, as my sinless Sacrifice of peace, I, believing, am not cast out, having entered in. I am held welcome still. I am still "owned a child." I

come not into condemnation; I stand in grace; still, and always, and continuously, for His blessed sake as CHRIST FOR ME. Where I fled, there I dwell. And the walls that shut me in from condemnation as I entered are as necessary this moment as they were then to keep me from condemnation. I cannot dwell in the suburbs, or pitch my tent in all the plain. It is within the sanctuary precinct, and there alone, that I can live, and rest at peace, and work with a quiet mind.

I say thus much at once on the force of the words, "Christ my Righteousness." As I proceed I trust to say more in detail. But in what I have said we touch, I think, the heart of the subject as a subject for the believer's life and death.

Now look a little with me at the passage I read just now, that short, pregnant passage. It stands in one of the inner sanctuaries of the Bible. This First Epistle of St John is very possibly the latest page of Scripture in date. Assuredly in it the Holy Spirit takes the reader into the last recesses of spiritual life and experience. He leads him into the most penetrating and searching views of holiness, and obedience, and love. He twice tells him that God is Love. He repeatedly speaks of the Christian life, as such, as a life without sinning. A tone and air of serene yet awful purity, at once most spiritual and most importunately practical, characterizes the pages. The Christian contemplated in this letter is a man of God indeed. He has fellowship with the Father and the Son. He walks in the light of God. He possesses eternal life, possessing God's own Son, who is the Life. He is a child of God now, and when his Lord shall appear he is going to be like Him, most gloriously like Him, seeing Him as He is.

All the more remarkable it is, then, all the more significant of deep, and pregnant, and eternal principle, that in such a passage, and with relation to such a Christian, comes in the language I have read, "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous: and He is the Propitiation for our sins." For one thing, we are here warned that the heights and depths of grace leave the liability to actual sinning there still. This blessed believer, this privileged and transfigured man, may very conceivably sin; so says St John. The whole weight, indeed, of the precious revelations John is making is meant to act against sinning: "These things I write unto you, that ye sin not." But very conceivably the man *may* sin. And if he does, then, whether the sin look great or little, whether it be visible or not, whether it be deed, word, imagination, impulse, tendency—what, when the sin happens, is to be the man's thought? Is he to say, "I am sorry, I regret it; yet, after all, from some points of view, it is a 'fall upward,' a development, a realization, a something not adjusted yet, but to be corrected and harmonized soon"? Is he to say, "My true law is the realization of my deepest individual life, and a certain mysterious knowledge of evil may need to be a factor in the process"? Is he to say, on the other hand, "I am an item in a vast total of regenerate humanity, of spiritualized human life, and all partial evil within this is universal good"? Is he to say, in simpler thought and phrase, "God is a Father: for me the divine Fatherhood is Alpha and Omega, my Creed, and Articles, and Confession. My spiritual life is just insight into that, and sympathy with that. All other phases of religious thought, if true at all, are but broken lights of that, and

the sooner we merge them in that great ray the better. As a man, certainly as a spiritually developed man, I am akin to God; I am one with God; I am in God; there is nothing in God for me to fear; a deviation from His ideal is indeed calamity, disease, imperfection; but the life and love of God suffusing me must heal and restore, and the burthen of the fact is lost in the sea of love"? Are these, or any of them, the ways in which the man is to deal with the event of his having sinned? No, not according to St John the Apostle. The truth with which he meets the case is at once sterner, firmer, tenderer: "*We have an Advocate with the Father.*" So the Father is thus, though a Father, yet a Judge, and a Judge who asks urgently a perfectly valid plea on the man's behalf. And our Advocate is "*Jesus Christ the Righteous;*" not now Jesus Christ the Meek and Lowly, the "altogether Lovely" with the charm of an eternal love, but Jesus Christ the Righteous, the Keeper and Honourer and Glorifier of eternal Law; Jesus Christ, at once the Lord and the Bondservant of everlasting Duty; Jesus Christ, in whose eyes that sin, that small sin perhaps, is hateful and abominable beyond imagination; Jesus Christ, whose pleading for us, we may be very sure, will not palliate our sin, nor tone it down, nor talk about falling upward and development.

"*And He is the Propitiation for our sins.*" Here is the basis of the advocacy, the strength of the plea, the reason of the sinning believer's, the defective believer's, non-condemnation, non-exclusion. "He is the Propitiation for our sins." Mark the words well. First, "*The Propitiation;*" we know what that is. It has but one meaning, in Greek or English. It means sacrificial pacification of an offended Power. And then, "*He is* the Propitiation;" observe what

that says. It is not "it," but "He;" not merely a thing done, but a Person who has done it; not merely suffering, but the Sufferer; not merely obedience, but the Obeyer; not merely death, but the Lamb of God slain. It is a phrase in which we see Merit, profound, mysterious, valid, prevailing; merit such that the sinner before the Father-Judge is an accepted child still, not for his own sake at all, but for this merit's sake; a merit all the while lodged, as all merit must be, in a Person; prevailing not merely because such and such things have been done, but because they have been done and borne by HIM. It is a memorable phrase. It is doubly memorable, standing where it does, in this glorious context of life and love. We have got into the inner sanctuary here; we are in this Epistle suffered indeed to look into the heart of God, God who is Love. Profoundly significant is it then that just in that sanctuary, just at that heart, shines the red and awful glory of that word Propitiation, as it shines again below (iv. 10) in that wonderful utterance, "God loved us, and sent His Son to be"—not merely His Revealer, not merely Love Incarnate, but—"the Propitiation for our sins." Never let us forget that Propitiation is an intensely Johannine word. Theologians have sometimes spoken as if it were a "Paulinism," or the like. If it were, I for one believe that it would be an infallible oracle none the less. But, as a fact, it is a "Johannism." It shines with its altar-fire out of St John's deepest teaching of inmost spiritual life.

"He is the Propitiation." The pacification of offended Holiness, the reconcilement of the Father-Judge in His awful consciousness and cognizance of His regenerate child's slightest sin, lies altogether here. Not in effusion of love, but in Propitiation. Not in presence of spiritual

life, but in Propitiation. Not in general considerations about Fatherhood, but in the particular divine fact of an Advocate with the Father, an Advocate who is the Righteous, and who is the Propitiation. So is the sin met, according to St John. So does the sinner "stand," in the judgment of that dread court. So is he "in no wise cast out." So, in respect of not being cast out, is he dealt with as if he had not sinned; as if he were the Righteous One Himself.

I might say, of course, much more on the details of this mighty, tender, holy passage. I might dwell largely on the word *righteous*. I might dilate on the sinless obedience through which and in which Jesus Christ moved to the Cross to be the Propitiation there. I might speak about the mighty positive merit of that obedience. It was a merit due not precisely to the sacred fact of His having obeyed every iota of His Father's Law (for, of course, in the very necessity of His holiness of will, He did so), but to the divine free will with which He first accepted the position of Man in which humanly to obey it. And I might point out the deep connexion of all this with the merit of the great agonizing act of propitiation proper when, as the Lamb unspotted, as He "who knew no sin," He died (as the Scripture witnesses) "by the determinate counsel of God," and beneath the iniquity of us all, "made a curse for us."[1] But there is no precise necessity that I should go off to these great topics now. I want to leave a few deep impressions large and plain upon your minds. And let this one be our sufficient impress from the deep-cut seal of these verses, the truth that Jesus Christ the Advocate, Jesus Christ the Propitiation, is the infinitely

[1] Acts ii. 23; Gal. iii. 13

necessary preservative of the regenerate man's acceptance, standing, peace, before the Father, in the event of his ever sinning, be it in violation or in defect.

Let me press it home again and again. "Christ for us" is no mere introduction to a state in which "Christ in us" is to be all in all. "Christ for us," still less, is an element of rudimentary and imperfect Christianity, a "childish thing" to be put away as the man grows up into larger, and more genial, and more comprehensive views of religion. Christ for us, in the region of law, and guilt, and condemnation, and acceptance, and the merit of unique obedience and unique sacrificial suffering, is the preservative all along, all along, so far as the believer for a moment, or for a step, deviates from the most holy Law of God.

It is to remind us of this, if I mistake not, that the Apostle adds just here the great words, "and not for us only, but also for the sins of the whole world." Sacred and blessed statement; but why *here?* Is it not just to remind the awakened and penitent believer, who has been long in Christ, but to-day is conscious of wandering from the true close walk with God, that he must stand, for purposes of acceptance, of justification, of peace, precisely on the old humbling ground? Yes, he must leave his Christian *experience* alone for this purpose, and kneel down at the foot of the Cross, and wrap himself in the Lord's Merit, precisely as the last, the newest, the least instructed penitent of "the whole world" has to kneel in the first moment of his first faith. But this is only by the way.

A strong thinker of the past generation, Isaac Taylor, of Ongar, somewhere says that to the end of time a Vicarious Atonement (in the old evangelical sense of those words) will be assailed with objections; and that to the

end of time the awakened, the thoroughly awakened, conscience will gravitate to the Vicarious Atonement as to its one possible rest. True witness; let me put my seal humbly to it in both its parts.

Another great Christian of a remoter past, Count Zinzendorf, has left on record a notice of a personal experience of his own which powerfully impressed me when I came on it a few years ago in a French memoir of his life. Let me read you the words: "About this time I met with the work of Dippel, in which the doctrine of Imputed Righteousness is attacked. Its system seemed to aim at eliminating from the idea of God the notion of His wrath; and just so far as I sympathized with that view I liked the system. I was then in the attitude of the natural theologian; and the 'good God' distressed me when His acts seemed to lack a sequence of mathematical precision. I sought to justify Him, at all costs, to men of reason. *But when I came to think over my own conversion*, I saw that in the death of Jesus, and in the word Ransom, there lay a profound mystery—a mystery before which Philosophy stops short, but as regards which Revelation is immovably firm. This gave me a new intuition into the doctrine of Salvation. I found its blessing and benefit first in the instance of my own heart, then in that of my brethren and fellow-workers (in the Moravian Church). Since the year 1734 the doctrine of the expiatory Sacrifice of Jesus has been, and will for ever be, our treasure, our watchword, our all, our panacea against all evil, alike in doctrine and in practice."

True witness, I say again, and again would humbly put my seal to its terms, in regard both of experience and of principle. And the principle of Taylor's dictum and

Zinzendorf's inner history is just as true for the progress as it is for the beginning of the believer's life. It is in point, not only in connexion with conversion, but in connexion with the lifelong needs of the Christian, and his lifelong peace and standing before God.

All that I would here add to the witness of these two quotations is a brief word on one great and glorious truth which they do not explicitly mention. I mean the Union of Christ and His people, the Union of Christ and the believing soul. Deeply convinced am I that in that blessed truth, that truth of which, as you know, the New Testament is really full, there lies not, indeed, a solution for us here below of all the problems that can be stated about Atonement and Acceptance, but a most precious assistance to the believer's thoughts as he grasps the reality of Atonement and Acceptance, and looks for the light of eternity to fall upon their as yet unsolved mysteries. Union with Christ is the radiating centre, or, shall we say, the attracting, the uniting centre, of the whole range of saving truths. What is the true virtue of faith? It is faith's revealed function of bringing the man into actual vital oneness with our glorious Head. What is the special virtue of that oneness from the point of view of our need as sinners? It is that, in the holy unity of Head and members, the member now receives, not arbitrarily, but as in a profound and real union, the benefit of the merit of the Head on the one hand, and the influx of the life of the Head on the other. Our Advocate, our Propitiation, is also our Elder Brother, our celestial Bridegroom, our vital Root, our living and life-giving Head. In Him we "possess His possessions," won for us. Amongst them we possess His dear-bought Merit, good for us from first to last of our

need. That merit is lodged for evermore in Him, and we are one with Him.

But this I but refer to in passing, with deep reverence before its radiant mystery, and I now make haste to a close.

How shall I best do so, so as to leave on our hearts and minds the impression which I long to leave, an impression at once deep and tender as before God; an impression of awe in presence of His holiness, and peace in view of His acceptance? My brethren in Jesus Christ, let me seek to bear a brief, earnest witness in closing to one profound need of our time. It is a far-spread need in all sections of the Christian Church; a need which prompts me to anything in the world but controversial acrimony; it is rather fitted to humble and hide the face as one essays to speak of it, for it is traceable not ultimately to any special doctrinal aberrations, but to the fallen heart of man. I mean the deep, the solemn need of a keener, tenderer, profounder SENSE OF SIN. It is a trite, prosaic thing to say, looked at upon the surface. But it is a thing of literally vital importance to the Church, and to the soul. Rejoicing as I do in the manifold proofs of Christian life at this time, I must yet utter my deep conviction that we are not growing, on the whole, in the sense of the sinfulness of sin. And while I think this I remember with sad distinctness that most true saying, that there has never been in Church history a great error, a great deviation from Scripture, but an inadequate sense of the sinfulness of sin has had to do with it. My brethren, let us pray for an intuition, so far as we can bear it (we cannot bear very much of it), into the sinfulness of sin, into the awful wrongness and rebellion of sin, into the condemnableness of sin, into sin as "by the

commandment" (note those words) "becoming exceeding sinful."[1] Let us pray that, while we mourn it as calamity and as disease, and loathe it as pollution, we may have some deep, some awful sense of it as GUILT, as the thing which the holy Law of God, the holy perceptive and prohibitive Law of God, must to all eternity abhor, and denounce, and sentence. Let us pray, pray really, that such a view may be to each of us most individual and personal, not a point for disputation with our neighbour a thousandth part so much as for self-abasement and hiding in Christ Jesus for our own souls. Let us ask the Lord the Spirit to show us our little sins, "our secret sins, in the light of His countenance,"[2] to let in a ray of His fiery Law upon our vanity, our pride, our temper, our unfairness, our sloth, our selfishness, our worldliness. Let us ask Him to show us what his *Law* says to our lack of love, our defect of love, to our neighbour, to our brother, to our "King that hath saved us." Let us ask Him, in the severity of His mercy, to take us to pieces and show us the interior of life a little as He has seen it. Let us ask Him to expound to us, for our own soul's knowledge, that word of His Book, "Whatsoever things the Law saith, it saith to them that are under the Law, that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world become guilty before God."[3] We need it, our modern Christendom needs it, with exceeding need.

And that the prayer may be the sooner granted, what shall we do meanwhile? We will gaze, in the glass of the Word, and asking for the Spirit's light, upon the revelation of the HOLINESS of GOD. Here too our need is extreme. The all-sacred words of love, and mercy, and Fatherhood —too often we so rend them from their divine contexts as

[1] Rom. vii. 13. [2] Ps. xc. 8. [3] Rom. iii. 19.

to forget that thing without which, be sure of it, none of them would retain one gleam of glory, "the glorious and fearful Name," the "Holy, Holy, Holy," that aspect and attribute of God which fills the watchers nearest the eternal throne with an absorbing and awful adoration. Let us learn the often-forgotten use and habit of adoration, of holy fear, of that sight of God which makes the soul veil its face with its very wings while yet it sings the solemn praises of the Infinitely Holy.

To see Him so is both to die and to live; to die to the last dream of claim or refuge, save beneath the Cross; to live to, and in, peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, to make discovery of the love of God which is in Jesus Christ our Lord.

"Mine eye seeth Thee, therefore I abhor myself."

"Woe is me, for I am a man unclean; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts."

"When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. He laid His right hand on me, saying, Fear not; I am He that liveth, and I became dead, and behold I am alive for evermore."[1]

My treatment of this great theme ends here. God knows with what a sense of incompletion and inadequacy I close it. But at least it is to me a sacred privilege to bear humbly my personal testimony to the "reason of the hope" of the awakened sinner, ay, of the awakened believer, as he finds himself face to face with the claims, with the law, with the holiness of God. It is long years now since—in the morning of manhood, after many a mental wandering—the question was driven home upon my own inmost being by a

[1] Job xlii. 5, 6; Isa. vi. 5; Rev. i. 17.

power which indeed was not myself, "What must thou do to be saved?" But that question came home in a way over which lapse of time has no power. The soul got intuitions then which it can never lose, into self, into sin, into holiness, and—blessed be God—into the need, the reality, the eternal rightness of the blood of the Lamb, of the righteousness of the Mediator. Long years have rolled, but these things are above time. And meanwhile, in the experiences of time, I have seen abundantly enough to assure me, amidst a universe of mysteries, that in the living grasp of these mighty truths, in the application of them and assimilation of them into man's life, there is "a power of God unto salvation" which there is in nothing else. Christ Crucified—Christ Crucified—He is still "a stumbling-block," He is still "folly." He is still and for ever "the power of God, and the wisdom of God" too.[1]

My brethren, I come back after all, as my last word, to this. Let us not rest without some deep sight of the Holy One in His holiness. It will show us self. It will show us sin. But also, blessed be God, it will show us the light and wonder of the Cross, the glory of the Lamb, the peace of pardon, the bliss of acceptance, the moral strength of the joy of the Lord, the joy of ceasing from our own works, to behold the fair beauty of JEHOVAH-TSIDKENU, the Lord our Righteousness.

[1] 1 Cor. i. 23, 24.

CHRIST THE MASTER

CHRIST THE MASTER

Preached in the University Church, Cambridge

"Whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that He might be Lord both of the dead and living."—ROM. xiv. 8, 9.

WE have here, as very often in the New Testament, a supreme spiritual truth stated in intense connexion with a common and present duty. Differences of opinion and of practice on certain secondary matters have disturbed the concord of the Roman disciples. And the Apostle declines to lay down any binding rule of practice. But he is bent with all his heart upon keeping both parties and all their members perfectly loyal to the great binding rule of unselfish love and considerate mutual helpfulness. And therefore without delay, without reserve, he brings in upon them the weight of a motive perfectly supernatural, absolutely Christian. He points them to the death and to the resurrection of their Redeemer, who had died to bear their sins and was risen to be their life. And he reminds them that in virtue of those amazing facts they who have sought in Jesus Christ their salvation now belong to Jesus Christ as His property. Their redemption is from one point a release—a release into more than liberty, into an even regal power

over old oppressors. But from another point it is an entrance, decisive and deep, into the possession of Another. Their Deliverer is now their Owner. To Him to-day, and to-morrow, and for ever, and in everything, they belong. And accordingly, in the present matter, they are to submit to Him their whole mental view and action in this controversy about meats and about days. One all-controlling fact is to adjust and govern every man's thought and temper towards his neighbour in the faith; it is that he belongs entirely and for ever to Jesus Christ. He has no right to a prejudice, to an animosity, no right even to a judgment or to a thought, which would be out of tune with his blessed Owner's rights upon him and presence in him. This was to temper the whole treatment of that problem at Rome.

I desire by God's grace to speak a little this afternoon about that great theme of the Gospel, the Lordship of Jesus Christ over His followers, in life and death. But let me first, as we pass on, point out the testimony borne by this passage of the Apostle to a feature of great importance in the main characteristics of Christianity.

What does St Paul's argument imply about New Testament Christianity? That in its very nature it is at once quite full of the powers of the world to come, and quite free from the "strange fire" of the fanatic. Here is a life whose every inner movement, and therefore its whole outer surface, is to be ruled from its depths by a supernatural relation to a supernatural Person. Here is a life, for Paul means not an iota less, in which the man is not to entertain an emotion, not to form a thought, regardless of the will of the slain and living Christ who reigns over him supreme. Yet on the other side here is a life in which the same man, not in spite of this supernatural relation, but

in direct issue from it, is to throw himself into the intercourse of the common day with a watchful regard for others, and a generous respect for their opinions, and the kindliest attention to all their claims. Such a temper is the precise antithesis to that of the fanatic. But it is the characteristic temper of the Religion whose other characteristic is that it roots itself wholly in the supernatural, the eternal, the divine; in nothing less than the Son of God, who loved us, and gave Himself for us, and rose and revived from the depths of that great death for us, that He might be the Lord of us dead and living.

Such is the Christianity of the New Testament; perfectly supernatural (so it asserts) in its origin and secret, and perfectly sane, temperate, considerate, in its application of itself to human life.

This runs all through the blessed Book. The secrets and certainties of heavenly joy and power lie there in congenial neighbourhood with the healthiest precepts of common duty. "*We shall be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord;*" "*Study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands.*" "*Be ye filled with the Spirit; filled with all the fulness of God;*" "*Masters, give to your servants that which is just and equal.*" "*Believing in Him, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, receiving the salvation of your souls;*" "*Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king.*"[1]

Such are the motives of the Gospel, drawn from the bright recesses of God, of Christ, of the work of the Holy Ghost, of the hope of glory. Such are the issues of those

[1] 1 Thess. iv. 11, 17; Eph. iii. 19, v. 18; Col. iv. 1; 1 Pet. i. 8, 9, ii. 17.

motives in the daylight sanity, the generous wholesomeness, of Gospel morals. In the living harmony of such characteristics lies one of the strongest and most pregnant of the assurances that we who believe have not followed cunningly devised fables, but rest upon the rock. Delusion, illusion—small part had *they* in the genesis of a Gospel which at once and by the same act opened the heaven of heavens to the human soul, and called it to throw its energies into the unselfish service of the hour.

But is that rock, then, solid? Are these motives genuine? Is this Jesus Christ of the Cross and the Resurrection at once the supreme Fact of history, and the Way, the Truth, and the Life for the needs and experience of the man? Then let us turn back to the text, and listen with new and definite attention to its report upon the essential and innermost relations between Christ and the Christian. How does it run? "Whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's." And why? Because this was the great purpose of our most blessed Redeemer. "*To this end* He died and lived again; *to this end*, that He might be Lord."

You observe the point and scope of the words. Pau here does not describe a universal Christian experience; he does not say that "we" are all self-devoted to our Master. He insists upon a universal Christian law; he says that we disciples are all absolutely bound to be thus self-devoted, for we are all purchased to be our Master's property.

It is this law, this constant spiritual fact, that Jesus Christ is the autocratic Owner of His followers, and then the resultant of it in His call to them to consent *ex animo*

to His Possessorship, to yield themselves out and out to the Will of God in Christ, that I reverently seek to point out to you this afternoon. A more familiar tenet in the abstract I could not lay before a Christian assembly. But is it not just one of those truths which mean practically next to nothing while they are entertained, as it were, in the air and at a distance, but which for many of even convinced and devout Christians need only to be brought home, to be translated into here and now, in order to become discoveries as of a new world, revolutions that bring in a new age in the history of the soul? It is one thing to regard our Lord with sincere homage in a large and general sense, holding fast through His mercy all the great treasures of catholic belief about His glorious Person, resting the burthens of conscience on His Sacrifice and Intercession, and recognizing the duty of at least a tacit and constructive loyalty to Him in the main outlines of life. It is another thing when the man discovers, with an insight perfectly calm and genuine, while yet it is given him from above, that what the Redeemer claims, and annexes, and appropriates, is nothing less than all the being, and all its action. It is a wonderful thing to discover that, not in figures and flights of speech, but in sober fact, "every thought is to be brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,"[1] if Christ is to have His due; that the will is to be laid in simplicity at His feet; that all faculties of the mind, and all their growth and all their gains, are to be presented honestly to Him for His far-reaching purposes; that reputation, when and while it is granted, is only a trust for Him; that material possessions are only a trust for Him; that our time is His, all His, morning, noon, and night, without interval or vaca-

[1] 2 Cor. x. 5.

tion; that our tongues are indeed His, in their every word; that "whether we eat, or drink, or whatever we do," all of it is to be done "to the glory of God,"[1] in this sense of a reference of the whole of life to Him. "For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord. . . . For to this end He died and lived again."

Deliberately and most humbly, as before Him of whom I dare to speak, I state thus, without abatement or extenuation, the New Testament position about the claims of Jesus Christ upon the Christian. Have I overdrawn them? I cannot present them in all the amplitude and depth, and at the same time the minuteness and precision, with which you will find them set forth in the New Testament as a whole. There, Christ is indeed all things in all His followers. There the Christian is a being whose true reason and true life is altogether and always in Jesus Christ. He is slave, and his Redeemer is absolute Owner. He is branch, and his Redeemer is Root. He is limb, and his Redeemer is Head. He is vessel, and the great Master of the house is always to have full and free use of him for any purposes of his own. He has no rights, and can set up no claims, as against his Lord: "*If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?*"[2]

Yes, my brethren, I cannot possibly overstate these claims of our most blessed Lord, with the Evangelists and Apostles open before me. And they are claims which have no regard for times and seasons, for phases of thought and the spirit of the age. If they were valid once, they are valid now; for they are rooted in eternal truth and point straight to an eternal future. They will not be out of date

[1] 1 Cor. x. 31. [2] John xxi. 22.

in heaven; they will last coeval with the throne of the Lamb. "*His bondmen—οἱ δοῦλοι αὐτοῦ—shall do Him service*," says the Seer of the Apocalypse in his final vision of eternity, "*and they shall see His face.*"[1] So, indeed, those claims are in force upon us now, they are valid for us here.

Again let me in our Master's name repeat it: He died and lived again that we might be in possession His, altogether His. My honoured younger brethren, shall I fear, shall I think it untimely and as it were out of order to press home upon *you* this spiritual fact, so grave, so stringent, so inexorable? Shall I think that it would be better to wait till life has somewhat lost for you its zest, as the phrase goes, and the fire is cooling, and you become by lapse rather than by growth more willing to entertain the whole idea of Christian duty? No, I will not think so. If I read in the least aright the characteristics of young men, it is common to find in them a willingness, a will, to know the uttermost of a matter; a discontent in idea with half-measures of thought and easy compromises of theory. For them that truth has often the most attraction which speaks out, so to say, most boldly, and demands the most, and calls for assent and consent in least ambiguous terms. And therefore the truth that the Christian is altogether appropriated by Jesus Christ, with all the strong issues of that truth, is a thing which I take up with reverent hopefulness to spread before you and to press upon you. In the name of Jesus Christ, then, I invite whosoever may need to hear, not only to the provided and offered peace of His most blessed Atonement, but to this other peace, pregnant with power, this peace in the depths within, when man looks

[1] Rev. xxii. 3, 4.

face to face upon the Son of God, and hears His absolute and all-embracing claim, and from his inmost soul says *Yes*, and "gives his hands," both his hands, and goes on his way to live "no longer to himself, but to Him who died for Him and rose again."[1]

I spoke of this as an experience of peace, peace full of power. It is so; and the reason is as luminous as it is divine. To surrender at discretion to Jesus Christ, who is not a Code but a Master, is so far forth to put your being into right relations with itself through right relations with Him. It is to gravitate at last upon your centre, and to be in gear. It is to be possessed, spiritually possessed; but by whom? By the Lord of archetypal order; by the Prince of Peace, by the Prince of Life; by Him in whom, according to one profound Scripture,[2] all this complex universe itself "consists," is held together, holds together. The more of His presence and dominion, the less of fret and friction. The less resistance to Him, the more genuine, and glad, and fruitful action; as it were a sphere-music of the moving microcosmus of the soul.

Shall I tell you from whom, not many years ago, I learned—if I learned, indeed, by the grace of God—some lessons in this part of the school of Christ? It was not an elder in the Lord. It was a young man in the magnificence, for such it was, of his youth and strength, a then recent hero of the Cambridge cricket-field. Labouring far away now for Christ's sake in the depths of heathendom, he is little likely to hear my words about him, and be grieved. I met him, and we talked together, not long after he had made discovery of the claims of his Redeemer, and had spoken his whole soul's *Amen* in answer. And nothing, as I look

[1] 2 Cor. v. 15 [2] Col. i. 17.

back upon my intercourse with that man, remains a more marked impression than his transparent rest and (I may so say) his warm and genial equability of gladness. Literally, it could not be mistaken, his Saviour was present in all things with him. And truly he was for this not less but more than ever a *man*, in the highest forms of courage and of purpose. And he was more even than ever a *gentleman*, in every delicate instinct of attention and consideration for others; the instinct of one whose personality had been liberated for his neighbour by the power of the indwelling Christ, Christ dwelling in the heart by faith.

My brethren, such spiritual phenomena—God be thanked there are, for those who will look, more and ever more of such to be found—repeat to us in living eloquence just the message of this afternoon; "whether we live or die, we are the Lord's." And they assure us of what all the while must be so, in the nature of spiritual things—that self-surrender to Jesus Christ, so far from being the prison of life, is its paradise; so far from being its dislocation, is its harmony. To yield ourselves to Him—what is it? To give, indeed, our Possessor all His rights, but also to accept for ourselves a relation with Him through which all the divinely genial forces of His Spirit shall "with Himself our spirit fill," and expand every faculty, and refine every emotion, while indeed —yes, it is so—the Lord of Peace treads down our inner enemies.

"Let us give ourselves up to God," says holy Fénelon,[1] true practiser of his own preaching, "without reserve or apprehension of danger. He will love us and make us to love Him, and that love increasing shall produce in us all the other virtues. He alone shall fill our heart, which the

[1] *Meditations for a Month.*

world has agitated and intoxicated, but could never fill. He will alter, perhaps, little in our actions, and only correct the motive of them by making them all to be referred to Himself. Then the most ordinary and seemingly indifferent actions shall become exercises of virtue. Then we shall cheerfully behold death approach as the beginning of life immortal. And we shall then discover the depth of the mercy which God has exercised towards us."

Illi servire est regnare: Who lives His bondman, he is king.

"*And whether we die, we die unto the Lord.*" If I read the Apostle's Greek aright, he means that not at death only, but after death, in the state of the departed, we shall hold unbroken this relation of surrender to Him—the bondservant to the possessing Lord.

> "For doubt not but that in the worlds above
> There must be other offices of love;
> That other tasks and ministries there are,
> Since it is written that His servants there
> Shall serve Him still." [1]

Yes, we will not doubt it. This word of the Apostle's looks altogether that way. And so that prescription of the Old Law about the self-enslaved Hebrew shall be fulfilled in the immortality of the Christian; "*I will not go out free; then thou shalt pierce his ear, and he shall serve thee for ever.*" [2]

It is a view of death, when death in God's time comes, full at once of soberest calm and a most vivid happiness—this passing, just as a faithful and willing bondservant, from one mansion to another of the same Lord. "*Here am I;*

[1] Archbishop Trench. [2] Deut. xv. 16, 17.

for Thou didst call me." A holy awe, but no misgiving tremor, shall mark such a transition, as the Christian passes from the peace of being his Master's here to the bliss of being his Master's there; "according to the mighty working whereby He is able even to subdue all things to Him self." [1]

[1] Phil. iii. 21.

CHRIST THE VICTORY IN TEMPTATION

CHRIST THE VICTORY IN TEMPTATION

Preached in the Chapel of Trinity College, Cambridge

"Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ."—Rom. xiii. 14.

These sacred words, like most other utterances of Holy Scripture, are illuminated by their context. They stand in a paragraph which brings up the thought of weapons and of war. The Christian man is called upon to be up and waking, not to consciousness only, but to action and to battle. He is to throw off the night-robe of the works of darkness, and to "put on" instead "the armour" and arms of light, and then in that accoutrement to move up and down amidst the realities of life. Strong and ready, watchful and victorious, he is to *walk*, to "walk seemly, as in the day."

This is the special reference stamped here upon the word "put on." The thought is not of a robe, rich and flowing. It is not of crown of king, or wreath of victor. It is of coat of mail and cap of steel. It is of the knight panoplied for the dreadful field, or for the road through fens and forests, the haunt of robbers, and giants, and wild beasts. To put metaphors and similes apart, we look

here at the Christian believer arming himself, as to his whole being, with what shall give him victory over sin; with what shall make him—not hereafter but now, not in Eden but in Babylon—more than conqueror against the devil, and the world, and the flesh.

Now think again, as in this context, of the phraseology of the immediate text. Here again is "put ye on." But here, for the armour, for the weapons, of the light, stands this astonishing equivalent and synonym—the Lord our Redeemer, the Person, the Self, of Jesus Christ. The imagery breaks down halfway, to let in at once this wonderful reality in its living truth—this blessed Being, in all the titles of His grace and power, not one designation left out—THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.

It is THE LORD—in all the significance of that great word; the heavenly King, the eternal Master. It is JESUS, in all the significance of that dear name; Son of man, Man of men, rescuing His brethren from their sins. It is CHRIST, in all the significance of that mystic title; the Anointed, the Possessor and Bearer of the Divine Spirit, the Giver of that Spirit to His people.

Designated thus, it is He who now takes, in the phrase, the place of the armour of the light. The imagery vanishes into Him. The armour of the light is He.

"Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ." Take Him, and nothing else and less than Him, for your secret of deliverance and prevalence. Clasp to you even Him, as your way how to move about amidst whatever tempting powers—able to withstand, well able to overcome.

In exposition and enforcement of such a text, I wish above all things to be practical, to be of use. Vain is our interpretation of the Holy Word, which not only "abideth,

but *liveth* for ever,"[1] be the treatment as ingenious or as eloquent as possible, if it does not somehow come home. For that Word was written on purpose to come home, to touch and move the conscience and will of us, in the realities of our inmost life. Never for one moment do we stand as merely interested students and spectators outside the field of temptation, of this kind or of that. Never for one moment, therefore, can we dispense with the great secret of safety and of victory.

So first I point to that severe and solid fact, the *need* of this putting on. I stand up here to remind myself and you of an old, an unalterable thing, the infinite holiness of God *versus* the all-pervading sinfulness of man. I point to that fathomless mystery, that hard, keen reality, the whispered "I ought" met by the muttered "I will not," or at best, "I do not." I apprise you, as if it were news, of the deceitfulness of sin, of the self-delusion of the heart. I bring before you, as if never seen before, the absolute spirituality of the holy Law, piercing to the joints and marrow of the soul. I place its mirror, as of glass mingled with fire, before your life and before mine. I ask you to see there pictured, not now the cruder sort of sins, the ghastly blots and hideous wens of impurity of act and word, things done and said in dens of vice, or planned and wrought in stifling solitude; no, nor now the opener forms of a gross self-indulgence, the flaccid deformities of a life manifestly earthy and of the earth. I ask you now to see in that microscopic mirror how looks the thought of foolishness, the resolve of petty selfishness, the miserable swell of most concealed self-praise, the burst of small impatience, the suppressed consciousness of neglected right and permitted

[1] 1 Pet. i. 23.

wrong, the lack of love to the Lord that bought you; the tacit refusal to live out your life, which is not your own, to Him; the non-response to His Spirit's strivings; the subtle preference of self to God in Christ which lurks in the kernel of every sin. Look at these things, I pray you, brethren, in the glass of the holy and absolutely immovable Will of the Eternal. And in that glass, in the background, see too the environments of influence and circumstance, which do not *create* your sin, as they do not create yourselves, but which bear, as by a law of moral gravitation, upon your sinfulness; the pains and the pleasures, the cares and the ease, the crowd or the solitude, the blame or the praise, with which the Tempter works on your already tainted will.

Bear with me for thus accumulating for a moment some fragments of the fact of a sinner's need. Should I forbear to do so, because I am entrusted with the preacher's office once more in this place so long loved and honoured in my inmost heart, a place where youth is in its noblest prime, where half a thousand lives instinct with present vigour prepare to go out equipped for the rich interests and high hopes of English manhood? No, I will not forbear. And you would not have me do it. For I speak to men; I speak to those who are not only, as of course, "sinners in a world of care," but are of ample standing to know in the dread experiences of the heart that sin is indeed a stern, penetrating fact.

"But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ." I am glad, for myself at least, to come at once, without intermediary reflections, to these great, these blessed words. In face of the realities of sin, of Roman sin in Nero's day—

but let us forget Rome and Nero; they were only dark accidents of a darker essence;—full in face of the realities of sin, St Paul writes down across them all these words, this spell, this Name, the Lord Jesus Christ put on. Take a steady look, he seems to say, at the sore need in the light of God; but then, at once, look *here*, look off. Here is the more than antithesis to it all. Here is that by which you can be, nevertheless, more than conqueror. Take your iniquities at the worst; this can subdue them. Take your surroundings at the worst; this can emancipate you from their power. It is the Lord Jesus Christ, and the putting on of Him.

How shall I speak as I would, to my heart and to yours, of Him as the panoply of the soul? I cannot do it; the truth so exceedingly transcends the feeble account of it. But I can just indicate facts, facts of this region of hope and light, and leave them to do their work, by the grace of God.

First, then, the Lord Jesus Christ is Himself a Fact. He was, and being what He was, He is. The Christ of Prophets, Evangelists, and Apostles, is. Sure as is the existence now of His universal Church, as the observance of the historic Sacrament of His death, as the impossibility of Galilæan or Pharisaic imagination having *composed*, not photographed, the portrait of the Incarnate Son, of the Immaculate Lamb; sure as the glad verification in ten thousand blessed lives to-day of all, of all, that the Christ of Scripture undertakes to be to the soul that will take Him on His own terms—so sure, drawn across all oldest and all newest doubts of man, across all *gnosis* and all *agnosia*, lies the present fact of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Then, secondly, it is a fact that man, in the mercy of

God, can put Him on. He is not far off. He presents Himself to your touch, to your possession. He says to you, Come to Me. He unveils Himself as literal partaker of your nature, bone of your bone. He shows Himself to you as stricken and smitten, your Sacrifice of Peace, your Righteousness, through faith in His blood. He shines on you through the glory of His promises, as the Head and Life-spring, in an indescribable union, of the deep, calm tide of life spiritual and eternal, prepared to circulate through your being. He invites Himself to make His abode with you; *with* you, did I say? Yes, but more; "I will come *in* to him; I will dwell in his heart by faith."[1] In that ungovernable heart of ours, that interminably self-deceptive heart, He engages to reside, to be permanent Occupant, to be present Master. He is prepared thus to take, with regard to your will, a place of power nearer than all circumstances, and deep in the midst of all possible inward traitors; His eye upon their plots, His foot, not yours, upon their necks. Yes, He invites you thus to embrace Him into a full contact, to "put Him on." Or, freely to change the metaphor, not the truth, you can come to Him, led by His Spirit, and can find in that coming realities of result as strong as they are joyful: a power divinely personal working in you, resources not your own for purity, and peace, and victory, which are just in their essence this—the living presence of our Lord Jesus Christ, as your well of life, your origin and cause of patience, of unselfishness, of strength for steadfast and prosaic duty, of ever new will and skill to work for Him, and for others as for Him.

May I not say of Him what the great poet says of Duty, and glorify the verse by a yet nobler application?—

[1] Eph. iii. 17; Rev. iii. 20.

"Thou who art victory and law
When empty terrors overawe,
From vain temptations dost set free,
And calm'st the weary strife of frail humanity!"

Yes, you can put Him on as the Panoply of light. You can puthim on as *the Lord*, accepting His absolute while most benignant sovereignty and will, deep secret of repose. You can put Him on as *Jesus*, clasping the truth that He saves His people from their sins. You can put Him on as *Christ*, sender of the Holy Paraclete, by whom the believer is one with his exalted Head, and receives into the whole being the resources of His life.

This is the armour and the arms. As St Jerome says on a kindred passage,[1] "it most clearly results that by the weapons of God the Lord our Saviour is to be understood." The soul that asks for spiritual victory must just involve itself in Him. Personal touch with Him, personal committal of self to Him, personal use of Him—here lies the talisman for gentlest power, and for the service which is freedom and command.

You may recollect that this text is memorable in connexion with the Conversion of St Augustine. In the garden at Milan he had laid down his copy of the Epistles. "*Take up and read*," said some voice near by. And the book opened at this verse. With the words his doubts vanished, and his will was in the will of God.

Alas, there falls one shadow over that fair scene. In the belief of Augustine's time, to decide fully for Christ meant, or very nearly meant, so to accept the ascetic idea as to renounce the Christian home. But the Lord read His servant's heart aright through the error, and filled it

[1] Eph. vi. 13.

with His peace. For us, in a surrounding religious light clearer, yes, in many things far clearer, than what shone even upon Ambrose and Augustine, for us, who quite recognize that in the paths of homeliest duty and commonest temptation lies the line along which the blessed power of Christ may best overshadow His disciple; for us, too, may the Spirit's voice say of this text, "Take up and read." Put on, and never again put off. Then we shall step out upon the old path in a strength new, and to be renewed for ever, armed against evil, and armed for the will of God, with Jesus Christ our Lord.

CHRIST THE LIBERATOR

CHRIST THE LIBERATOR

Preached before the Church of England Young Men's Society, Cambridge

"If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."—St John viii. 36.

We have here one of the many passages where the Lord Jesus commends Himself. You well know that it is one of the characteristics of this wonderful Person, this unique Person, the Lord Jesus, to commend Himself. Meek and lowly of heart, He yet commends Himself. Doing not His own will, but the will of Him that sent Him, He yet commends Himself. Vast and imperial is this self-assertion of Christ Jesus. "I am the Light of the world;" "I am the Way, the Truth, the Life;" "I am the Bread that cometh down from heaven;" "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father;" "He that loveth son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me;" "Come unto Me, and I will give you rest;" "If I, the Son, make you free, ye shall be free indeed."[1]

It is a wonderful study, this self-commendation of the Saviour, taken along with His unspeakable tenderness and meekness. What heart that has one relic left in it of moral perception, of the sense of the beauty and the glory of holiness, but feels in the presence of the character

[1] Matt. x. 37, xi. 27, 28; John vi. 50, viii. 12, xiv. 6.

of Christ that it is gazing on an indescribable goodness? Believe or not believe in His divine claims, reckon yourself if you please among the many of this day who hold in suspense, alas, their confession that He is their Lord and their God; I yet maintain that, unless you have reached a state of artificial, and elaborate, and in a serious sense prejudiced unbelief, or unless you have sunk through a depth of moral defeat into a kind of moral stupefaction, you feel in the presence of the character of Christ Jesus that you are gazing upon pure goodness indeed. It is Charles Lamb, I think, who says, "If Shakespeare were to enter our room on a sudden, we should rise in intellectual reverence; if Christ were to enter, we should bow down to kiss the hem of His garment."

Aye, but what does all this mean? It means the Godhead of Christ. It means that, being Man, he was and is also the Eternal. "*Si non Deus, non bonus*," runs the old dictum; "*If not God, not good.*" Why not? Why, just because of these immeasurable claims, this mysterious self-assertion, this perpetual upholding of Himself as the Light, and Life, and Liberty, and Lord of the human soul. All this, if absolutely true, means Godhead, means God. And if not absolutely true, then the Speaker was guilty of a moral obliquity; unless, indeed, you credit Him with a mental obliquity,—which is not very likely. With such claims, He stands before you with the inexorable alternative—"If not God, not good." If good, and with such claims, then God; "God manifest in flesh."

I could not but touch a little on this mighty theme, in face of such a text as this. Here stands One who claims this great potency and prerogative, to make me

free, and free indeed. And my inmost self responds to the offer with the sense of need of freedom, moral freedom, spiritual freedom, freedom from a torturing conscience, freedom from a terrible captivity of will, freedom from the guilt of sin before my eternal Judge, freedom from the power of sin within my conscious self. You need, as a sinner, to be free; and perhaps this very evening you have advanced from a mere admission of need into a profound sense of want, a "hunger and thirst after righteousness," an indescribable longing, and aspiration, and request to be that which the Eternal would have you be. And here, here in this written page, in this authentic record of a life which assuredly man did not invent, and which is, therefore, fact, here speaks this voice of promise, "Ye shall be free indeed;" here stands this living Promiser, "I am the Son; I can make you free." And just in proportion to our craving for a freedom of the soul, will be the intense attention with which we shall look the Promiser in the face, and from His very words, and manner, and person extract the assurance of His capacity to fulfil. "Believe ye that I am able?" "Lord, I believe; and he worshipped Him."[1]

Now, therefore, with the calm realization that the Promiser, being eternal and divine, can keep His word, let us this night listen to His promise, and grasp it and clasp it for ourselves. And oh, to leave argument alone for the moment, and throw ourselves upon fact, oh let Him who spoke in Jerusalem speak to us indeed, Himself, by His Holy Spirit! What does the preacher stand here for? Just that the testimony of a sinner may point his friends, through mercy, to the Saviour, and then may

[1] Matt. ix. 28; John ix. 38.

leave them alone with the Saviour, for His lesson, and His influence, and His love. So be it, Lord Jesus Christ, this night.

Dear men and brethren, this promise, then, is unto you. Do you need it? Will you take it? "If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."

You need it; you have your special needs of it, as young men, just as others have their special needs. You, unless you are very young indeed, younger in thought than age, know well how strong, how hard and real, can be the moral bondage of young men. Not on the surface, of course, in many cases. On the surface, young manhood has a large look of liberty, and more and more so every year. Sooner and sooner in our day the young life breaks from authority and obedience at home. Fathers and mothers abdicate, and sons rebel, very early in the day at the present time. Restraints and observances of all kinds, that are not enforced by the sheer necessities of life and business, are repudiated by many young men right and left; you do not need that I should explain. And early, ah, how dreadfully early, do young men accept the emancipation of the evil one, in the ghastly liberty-land of lust, of gambling, and of drink! Is it not the thought of many a young heart, "Why should I be a slave? why go in leading-strings any longer? Others break loose; why not I? Parents were young once; were they all virtuous then? Preachers were young once; are they all virtuous now? Do they mean all they say about heaven and hell, and righteousness and judgment to come? Are not these things the mere fetters of a dream, fit to keep young wills down, until they wake up to life's morning and life's heat?

Come, I will be a bold swimmer; and it is pleasant to swim with the stream at last."

To swim against a stream betokens stronger and freer limbs than to swim with it. But that by the way.

Well, men and brethren, are not such thoughts as I have spoken out the real sentiment of many a young man's heart in Cambridge? When on the Lord's day morning you see the knots and groups walking away from the church-bells, a pipe or cigar perhaps in every mouth, is not one sentiment in many of those young hearts just this? "We will be free indeed. Our wills are our own; our time is our own; our thoughts and our lips are our own. Who is lord over us?"

But all this is on the surface. Go a little way beneath, into the deep realities of the life and the soul of man, and the picture is reversed. These young lives of self-assertion and of self-seeking independence are not, cannot be, really free. Without inner peace there is no liberty of the true self. Every restless toss and turn of conscience under known and permitted wrong is the tug of a captive at his chain. Every feeling, however slight, of inner self-condemnation for selfishness, for unkindness, for undutifulness, is the sentence of a judge on an arrested prisoner at the bar. Every choosing of a wrong, or neglecting of a right, just because others do so, is the helpless, degraded march of a slave to the market where he sells himself for nothing. Is it liberty when a young man scorns his father's commandment, and forsakes the law of his mother, only to bind himself hand and foot with the fetters of the public opinion of ungodly companions, which he knows he dares not slight, for he is a slave to their praises, and most of all a slave to their laughter? Is it liberty when he has chosen so to live that

he dares not think of death, or can learn to dare it only by the wretched expedient of a cheap, and easy, and utterly shallow infidelity? When the awful whisper of conscience says, "You are wrong," and the awful voices of a Book that is utterly unlike any other says the same, and at once the eternal laws of right, and the Cross and Love of Christ, are all arrayed against that man's will, is there liberty in that?

Dear brethren, these things whereof I speak are facts. There is no bondage like that of the uneasy conscience. There is no bondage like that of the sin-bound will, that cannot say a true *no* to the world, or to the devil, or to the flesh. And is not this a bondage felt tremendously by young men? Is there not many a man amidst the throngs who break the Sabbath, or haunt the tavern, or the gaming-table, or visit the bad house, who amidst his loudest boasts of liberty knows himself a captive and a slave? Aye, and not only in cases of a more flagrant kind, but where sin is a solitary thing, as we think, it is so. Where wholly secret acts, or wholly undiscovered thoughts, are the man's only development of sin; where perhaps the temptation lies only in what the world calls the more respectable directions of pride, or bitterness, or selfishness, or simple worldliness and neglect of God; where it lies in the mere utter failure to set an example for good, in confessing the Lord and living by His will; there, quite as truly as in the more open and notorious classes of wrong-doing, the heart knows the bitterness of its own bondage, and despises its own boasts of liberty.

Have you ever taken the matter in hand, and tried to educate the inner slavery into liberty, and to force down the inner rebellion into order, in a strength of your own? Very possibly you have. And perhaps, in a sense, you

have succeeded. A vile habit has become less frequent; possibly it has quite ceased. But is it not miserably partial work; a scraping of the surface, a whitewashing of the sepulchre? There is no peace at the centre of your being. You are but "holding the wolf by the ears;" or at best, if the wolf is driven out, the serpent has glided in, and vice has left the nest warm for pride.

Is there no hope? Is there no liberty, deep, real, and that you may *enjoy?* Must it be to the last only a dreadful balance between sin and sin, one enemy upon you from the rear while you are struggling with the other in your front? No; it need not be thus, brother and friend. In this world of sin and indescribable temptation, for these hearts which are in league by nature with that world, and which to the last will have an element of sin within them, there is a glorious freedom, promised by the eternal Friend, and truly conveyed to the souls that will take Him at His word.

Listen again: "If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." Look with me at one or two aspects of that verse, and believe as you look that what it says it means.

1. "*If the* SON." The Promiser is this: He is the SON of the Blessed; He is the Only Begotten; Begotten, not made; God the Son of God; of one Being with the Father. By Him all things were made; and for us men and our salvation He came down from heaven, and was made Man. Do you think that *that* is an invention of "the priest"? Do you think that the idea of such a Person and of such a Work was generated out of human minds? No, it is self-evidential of its own eternal truth, even if it were not ringed and ramparted around with

all the vast bulwarks of the historic evidences, the fact-made proofs, of the Gospel story. Behold the Son of God! It is the Beloved, in whom the Eternal Soul delighteth. "Thou art the King of Glory, O Christ; Thou art the everlasting Son of the Father." In Thy wonderful name, the SON, all the treasures of majesty and of mercy lie stored and compacted into one golden truth, one maze of unsearchable riches.

Take this thought in first, the divine competence of the Promiser. Look, weary conscience; look, helpless will. Believest thou that HE IS ABLE to do this? *Can* He free thee from the load of guilt and from the manacles of sin? Yes, for it is THE SON.

2. "If the Son shall *make you free*." The "if" implies the promise, that He will. If you will call Him in, and let Him work, He will. He will deal with both aspects of your captivity. He will deal with your enslaving sense of unsettled guilt. Are you, through fear of judgment, subject to bondage? "Once to die, but after this the judgment;"[1] is that immovable word a terror and captivity to your soul? The Son shall make you free. The Son was made the Sin-bearer for such as you. The Lord laid on Him the whole iniquity of your character. He stooped to take the intolerable burthen of the responsibility of the sinner, and to be treated by eternal Law as if it were His own. He was bruised for your iniquity. He was made sin, He was made a curse, for you. All your load of remembered, and of forgotten, wrong; all the dead weight of condemnable commission and equally condemnable omission, shall be, as to the vengeance of the heavenly Law, as if it were not,

[1] Heb. ix. 27.

if you will but believe on the Lord the Son. To touch the Son, with the touch of simplest trust, of accepting trust; to come to the slain Son of God by faith; this is the one but the blessed way, straight and at once, to the pardon, to the acceptance, to the smile, of the eternal Judge. The outcast of the City of Destruction becomes in spiritual reality the welcomed inmate of the home of the Father of our Lord, as he believes in the slain and risen Son of the Father. "As many as received Him, to them gave He the right to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name."[1] "The blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, shall purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God;"[2] that is, it shall set you free in full justification from the load of unpardoned sin, and shall disengage your will to love, and so to serve, the Holy One. This is divinely true.

But is even this all? Is freedom from condemnation the only mode of liberty given by this great Son of God? I seem to hear some young man's heart (but such questions come from the hearts of not young men only), I seem to hear it sadly saying to itself, "I want a freedom now from this dire bondage of temptation in my soul. Humbly believing the efficacy of my Lord's blood to take away my guilt, I feel all the more on that very account a deeper and intenser longing than ever before to walk with Him and to please Him, in the holy liberty of a willing and glad obedience. Is my experience to be one perpetual yielding to the risings of temptation? Is my victory to be no better than merely not to *do* an evil which still reigns in my desires? Is it to be merely not to *show* the anger which I still *feel*? Not to *work* the impurity which I still *imagine*? Not to flaunt the

[1] John i. 12. [2] Heb. ix. 14.

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vanity which still swells within? Will not the Son make me more free than this, from the bondage and the burthen of myself? Oh could I walk more at liberty from myself! Could I go down to my daily work in home, or shop, or office, with a deeper, simpler, inward liberty, how would my life be transformed, how would my witness for my Lord be brightened!"

Such longings are the Spirit's work. And in His own mysterious way the Son shall here also make you free indeed. Let me dwell a little on this, and I have done.

First, then, in this matter, be warned against error. Do not dream that in this life your condition is ever as a fact morally and spiritually perfected. No, to the last, though the true Christian is not "in the flesh," the flesh is in him. "Enter not into judgment with Thy servant,"[1] will be one of his prayers to the end, if he steers by the Word that cannot lie. No confession of sin in our Liturgy will be too deep for him, as in the light of the Holy One with whom He walks he learns in his own soul something of God's opinion of what sin is, of what is sin; and sees iniquity in the thoughtless word, in the self-tainted thought, where once he scarcely saw it in the impure or cruel deed. No; the believer will never rise above the need of the Lord's prayer, "Forgive us our trespasses;" he will never get beyond the experience of the last Apostle, "If we confess our sins."

But does this mean that the Son of God cannot do great things in your soul's emancipation? No, my brethren, no indeed. "If He make us free," then, compared with the intensest efforts of our will apart from Him, "we shall be free indeed." The Son can indeed bring a blessed

[1] Ps. cxliii. 2.

freedom into the inner world; let us, let me, recognize that fact with growing joy. Tempted Christian, have you really put the Lord in command of your heart? Are you really, through grace, willing that He should be the absolute Ruler there? Have you quite simply put Him first, first before ambition, first before worldly interests, first before man's praise and blame? Are you quite *willing* to "commit the keeping of your soul to Him in well-doing"?[1] And, being so willing, are you simply looking to Him to work—using all His means of grace, and not least the *secret* means, the privately pondered Bible, the exercise of secret prayer,—but using them as guides after all to HIM, the Lord the Son, who died for you and rose again? Then I humbly but boldly say to you, take your strongest temptation, take your weakest point, write across it in your soul the great words, "HE IS ABLE;" and humbly commit it, in calm expectant faith, to Him as to a living Redeemer. Hear Him as he says, "My grace *is* sufficient for thee;"[2] and look in His face as He says it. Is it not a true word from the Lord of truth?

You shall find it wonderfully true. I do not say that inner conflict will never come; I do not say that you will need no more to watch and pray; God forbid. But I say that you shall joyfully experience great victories instead of little; deep changes instead of shallow; continuity of inner peace instead of pitiful intermittency. I say that the experience of the Lord's success with a case as difficult as yours, as difficult as mine, shall be within you a spring of indescribable rest, and joy, and gentle power. You shall know better than commentary or sermon can teach you what that meaneth, "That Christ may dwell in your heart by faith;" "Not I, but Christ liveth in me."[3]

[1] 1 Pet. iv. 19. [2] 2 Cor. xii. 9. [3] Eph. iii. 17; Gal. ii. 20.

I preach no strange doctrine. I dread new-fangled word and phrase in the school of the spiritual life. But I know for myself the greatness of the difference between an experience where the soul does but gasp, as it were, through its struggles towards a distant Lord, and the experience where that Lord is profoundly with it at the centre, and where the struggles, outward or inward, are met from a central sense of His presence and His power, and with the deep, quiet gladness of knowing that the victory is not mine but His.

It is possible, through Him, for the fiery temper, for the peevish spirit, to be divinely subdued into a great calm of inward patience and gentleness and love. It is possible, through Him, for the defiled imagination to turn with a blessed and boundless preference to all thoughts of purity and good. It is possible through Him for the vain to become sincerely self-less; for the selfish in full reality to look with loving earnestness upon the things of others; for the covetous to delight in giving for the Lord. "Ye shall be free indeed." Write that wonderful "*He is able*" across your worst temptation; and ye shall be free indeed.

What a rich reality to you then will be the presence and the love of Christ! What then will be the brightness and the simplicity of your witness to Him in life and word! And at last, what will be the joy and peace of your entering into His eternal presence; the kindling instinct of expectant love, always blent with profoundest self-abasement, with which you will look forward to behold the unveiled beauty of His holiness, thus loved, and sought, and felt below! For now, at best, we know in part; but then shall we know even as we are known. "Now we see through a glass, darkly: but then face to face."

CHRIST THE ANSWER TO THE UNANSWERABLE

CHRIST THE ANSWER TO THE UNANSWERABLE

Preached at St John's Church, Weymouth

"Lord, to whom else shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."—St John vi. 68.

"Yea, Lord: I believe that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world."—St John xi. 27.

These two sayings are each of them an answer to a question asked by the Lord Jesus. The first was spoken by Peter in the name of the Twelve, when Jesus asked them if they also would go away. The second was spoken by Martha to Jesus, at the entrance of Bethany, when He asked her if she could believe that whosoever lived, and believed in Him, should never die.

Most different from each other were the two occasions and the two speakers. The two narratives stand far apart from each other in St John's Gospel, and Capernaum and Bethany are far asunder in place, and Peter and Martha were widely dissimilar in character. And the trials laid before Peter and Martha were different also. Peter was tested by mysteries of doctrine. Martha was tested by a mystery of doctrine and by an agony of sorrow too.

Yet there is a likeness, an affinity, between the two

answers, which combines them into one most helpful lesson. In each case a disciple is tried by a word spoken or a deed done by Jesus; and in each case the disciple comes out victorious by the simple yet mighty secret of a personal knowledge of Jesus Himself.

Let us take this double text with a view to this single line of teaching. Let these two utterances, by the Lord's merciful grace, exemplify to us the happiness of trusting the Redeemer in the dark because of what we know of Him in the light.

Consider the incidents and answers one by one.

1. Peter and the Apostles had been listeners to our Lord's Discourse in the synagogue at Capernaum. It had been a critical and sifting occasion. The morning had seen the Lord thronged by eager followers. The people had thought no distance too long, no toil too great, if they might see Him and be near Him again. But the same day saw Him deserted, finally deserted, by many of those followers: "From that time many of the disciples went back, and walked no more with Him."

What had caused this mournful change? It was the humbling, rebuking mystery of His words. He had, as He ever used to do, preached Himself. He had proclaimed Himself as the Bread of the soul. He had uttered the astonishing assurance that, if they would live, He must be their Food. These words present deep mysteries to us still; how much more would they do so to them then! But this was not the only, nor the chief, difficulty that day for the listeners to our Lord Jesus Christ. He had openly spoken of the mystery of a divine and sovereign act as absolutely necessary to bring the soul to Him at all: "No

man can come to Me, except the Father which sent Me draw him. All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me. Therefore no man can come to Me, except it were given him of the Father."

Sayings like this were "hard." They baffled many of the Teacher's followers. "Who could hear them? How can this Man"—He, visible yonder—"give us His flesh to eat? And does it really need an almighty power to bring us to personal dealings with Him?"

Many were thus repelled and disgusted that day. But the Apostles held by their Lord. He asked them—and how touching is His question, spoken in the same breath, as it were, with such awful depths of truth—"Will ye also go away?" And Peter, for the rest, replied that they would not. And this for the simplest of reasons; they could not. There was no alternative, no choice. They had one great need, eternal life. The secret how to get it they found in the teaching of Jesus, and nowhere else. To whom should they go? He had the words of eternal life.

We are not for a moment to think that Peter, or that John, or any of their brethren, at that time *saw through* the mysteries of our Lord's great discourse. Certainly they did not. They did not as yet understand His dying work at all. "Be it far from Thee, Lord!" How could they then have guessed what He meant by eating His flesh, and drinking His blood? They did not dream as yet of the wounding of His flesh and the shedding of His blood in that precious death which, when received and welcomed in faith, is the sinner's life. And most surely they did not see through the riddle of the divine sovereignty of grace, any more than Paul did long afterward, when his

one reply to the objector was, "Who art thou, O man, that repliest against God?"[1]

Yet these great perplexities, these clouds of wonder and awe, could not neutralize their choice of Jesus, their confidence in Jesus. He had spoken the trying words, and quite declined to unsay them. From Him they saw neighbours and brethren drawing off, because they could not "hear Him." Yet *they* did not go. And their reason was—they could not.

My brethren, we too may be tried as were the Apostles. We may, by God's Providence, or by God's Word, be brought face to face with doubts and difficulties of even terrible reality and power. Few thoughtful Christians but know something of this. Perhaps our perplexity is caused by something in God's *works;* we have wandered unawares into dreary doubts of the Maker, or into a sad unconsciousness of Him. Or the riddles of His Providence have tried us. Like Asaph, when we think on much around us here, "it is too painful for us."[2] But above all it is thus when we look in the face the great foundation-mystery, sin; when we ask how sin began; why sin was permitted; what shall be sin's issue; what are the limits of salvation; why all should not be saved; why there is a strait gate, and a narrow way, and why few find it; why many should be lost; why any; why one; why the *one* way is Christ; why there is no salvation in any other; how all this accords with the tender mercies of the Eternal, which are, yes, indeed, which are, "over all His works."[3]

Such are some of the questions of which few Christians quite escape the pressure, sooner or later. And most of them *no* Christian man can quite clear up to his own soul,

[1] Rom. ix. 20. [2] Ps. lxxiii. 16. [3] Ps. cxlv. 9.

or to another's. Yet there they stand, in the works of God, and in His Word. The Saviour's own lips speak freely of the final and eternal doom of sin, and of the sovereignty of God. And the Saviour's lips do *not* give a reasoned-out solution of either mystery.

Now, shall we be shaken in mind by all this? Shall we be made to doubt Christ? Shall we be driven off from Him, and walk no more with Him? No; not if we have any of that experience of Him which Peter at Capernaum confessed: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." Or, to give the sentence with the exact emphasis of the Greek, "*Words of eternal life* Thou hast."

No, Lord; to whom else shall we go? If we must have these riddles explained, which Thou dost not explain, who shall do it? Shall logic? shall fancy? shall poetry? shall science? or history? or nature? They cannot. The very clouds we complain of as lowering around Thy brightness, only ride in heavier and thicker masses in the hopeless evening sky of Christless thought. There too are the clouds. But where is the eternal Sun?

"*Words of eternal life Thou hast!*" Of this Peter was sure. In his inmost soul he craved for life eternal. Deep under every other question lay this—how to reach a joy, power, and purity eternal? How to see God? How to stand at last sinless and immortal in a sinless and immortal world? How to get free from sin's bondage now? How to be pure in heart now? How to be at peace in death, and after death for ever? And Jesus had the key of this deep secret, "this last felicity." Whatever else Jesus said in Peter's hearing, He said what showed Peter that He was the one Way to life eternal. And so Peter clung to Jesus,

because Jesus met the want he so intensely felt, and because (we surely may observe) the fact of His supplying that want, of His being able to show His followers, and give His followers, eternal life, was in itself to them the golden pledge that all these clouds, problems, tortures, of mystery and perplexity, were perfectly safe in the hands of that Lord Jesus. He might be entirely trusted to explain them at last; nay, if He *never* explained them, He might be trusted with them still.

The Apostle knew just this about his Master—that he had the words of eternal life. So he could hear from that Master's lips the utterances which repelled so many round him, and yet *not* go away. And so shall we too not go away, but cling the closer to our Redeemer, if we, like Peter, have found in Jesus and His words the secret of eternal life. If He, in holy reality, has approved Himself "the life of our spirits;" if we have found in Him our purity, our humility, our release from selfishness, our peace of thought, our spring of hope, we shall feel that the mysteries spoken by His lips and written in His Word have already received *this* solution, that they are known to HIM. HE understands them; and He, understanding them, asks us to trust Him with them. And we can do so, because it is He alone who has the words of eternal life.

2. But now we turn, for a very little while, to the precincts of the small town on Olivet. There, at the entrance to Bethany, stand, face to face, Martha and Jesus; Jesus arrived four days too late; Jesus summoned so eagerly and come so slowly—while Lazarus lies dead in his grave. And there Jesus says to Martha—in that uttermost anguish of bereavement, a bereavement which He might

have prevented—Jesus says to this lacerated heart, mourning for its precious dead, "Whosoever believeth in Me shall never die. *Believest thou this?*"

It was a tremendously testing question. To the most exalted and enlightened faith just then it would have been indeed "a hard saying." And Martha's faith was far from being on all points exalted and enlightened, as this very narrative shows us. And we know enough of her character from elsewhere to feel that for her it must have been singularly difficult to grasp, *in the dark*, a lofty spiritual hope. We could better perhaps understand a similar question addressed to Mary, and might more easily expect an adequate reply from *her*. But it is to Martha Jesus speaks, just after allowing her brother to die; and it is Martha who answers, with the meek omnipotence of faith, "Yea, Lord, I believe that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world."

It is a complete and wonderful answer. Scripture records very few instances of firmer and deeper sighted faith. This woman, "cumbered with much serving," as she had lately been, is here able to rise, at once, close by her brother's grave, to the demand to believe what might well have seemed a positive contradiction: and she believed it—because of the Person who spoke it; because of what He was, and for that cause alone.

Most comprehensive the brief answer is: "Yes, Lord; I believe it all. Thou art the Resurrection and the Life; he that believeth in Thee shall never die. I believe it—not because I can reason it out, not because I understand the secrets of that wondrous revival, of that deathless life; but because *Thou* sayest it, and I know Thee. Yes, Lord; I accept it all. My beloved one is in his grave,

but I will believe that he is not dead. For I believe that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God which should come into the world. I have learned to be sure of *this*, and it carries with it all things. Thou art the Anointed One of the Prophets; Thou art the Son of the Father; therefore I believe all this. Say what Thou wilt, and I will still answer, *Yes*, *Lord;* for still I shall be sure that I may accept all Thy words—for I trust Thee—for I know Thee."

Thus Martha, like Peter, overcame the stress of an awful mystery by simplest personal confidence in her Lord. Imperfect faith it was, but very real. She was really sure of Jesus as the promised Christ; and she rightly felt that that was a good reason, a gloriously solid reason, for trusting Him in the dark.

We thought just now of the burthens of *the mind.* We thought how the believer's mind may be shaken, and how the view of the Saviour as the Revealer of life eternal can bring back a troubled intellect into happy faith and firm adherence. Here we have a similar truth before us in view of the burthens of *the heart.* The affections, crushed by bereavement, are dealt with here. The trial of the mourner is in question here. Are you shaken by some deep sorrow? Has the shadow of death come dark across your life? Has the desire of your eyes been taken from you with a stroke? Is the stay you most seemed to need, the presence you most longed to cherish, the companionship in which you took most delight, removed, vanished, gone—as to this world for ever gone? You try to be "resigned;" but it is a weary struggle. You will not, you dare not, seek to forget. And you cannot see the cause, the *rationale*, of the blow. It is a mystery to you altogether; and your heart is tempted, perhaps, in its inner silence, to feel in this stroke only some

terrible wound inflicted by a vast and merciless machine, some blow of a cruel fate, some tyranny of an inevitable and unpitying "Nature." You do not say so; but you are tempted more than half to feel it. And the effort to bow to the Lord's will, and to love the Lord's will, is hard indeed if it be so.

Well, then, as your true remedy here also, "look unto Jesus." Look at God's will, not in the abstract, but in Him. He is the Will of God. This blessed Jesus Christ, this Son of God, who should come, and did come, into the world—look at Him beside your dear one's motionless grave. Look at the fact of Him, though it has to be read through many tears. In Him you have the insoluble explained. In Him, and nowhere else, you have death, while it seems to crush you, yet "abolished." In Him you have Resurrection, with all its untold mysteries, yet seen to be an absolute certainty. He, this Saviour, this Lord Jesus Christ, because He is what He is, is worthy your *complete* confidence; worthy to be trusted in the dark, quite in the dark; worthy to be trusted to love when He seems to forget, to triumph when he seems to fail—"according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself."[1]

Thus, in the answer of Peter and in the answer of Martha, we have seen a little of the power and sweetness—in the perplexities of the mind, and the anguish of the heart—of a direct acquaintance with, and rest in, Jesus Christ; in Jesus Christ the one and perfect Saviour, the one Fulfilment of the mighty lines of prophecy, the one Giver of the words of life eternal, the one Resurrection, the one Life.

[1] Phil. iii. 20.

Make sure of Him. Seek Him, if He has yet to be found. "Follow on to know Him."[1] He is the absolute necessity of your mind, and of your heart, whether you are aware of it or not. And then, make surer and yet surer of Him in practice. Personally deal with Him. Arm yourself for all trial with Him. Day by day be hearing words of eternal life from Him. Gather your thought, faith, hope, love, around Him—the Crucified, the Risen. Then you will be better equipped than by the subtlest reasoning to meet all the questions of the mind; and then you will be better armed than with the warmest fancy and the strongest emotions to deal with the anguish of the heart.

Your reasoning will be—Jesus Christ: "I know not this secret thing, or that, but my Lord knows, and I can trust it to Him, and I cannot leave Him."

Your resignation will be—Jesus Christ. In Him you *know* the Resurrection and the Life to be a certainty, an accomplished fact. You bend above the grave, and listen to the silence of the earth and heaven, and yet await in strong patience the resurrection-joy; for He once lay there Himself, and rose again. He died for you. He died before you. And now, in the light of nothing less than that, He bids you look on Him, and then go on to trust Him—in the dark. He shall change that dear body of humiliation to be like the body of His glory—not according to your little knowledge, but "according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself."

[1] Hos. vi. 3.

CHRIST THE UNITING HOPE OF HIS PEOPLE

CHRIST THE UNITING HOPE OF HIS PEOPLE

Preached in Trinity Church, Cambridge

"The love which ye have to all the saints, for the hope which is laid up for you in heaven."—Col. i. 4, 5.

St Paul, in all likelihood, had never visited Colossæ. The first words of the second chapter of the Epistle seem to say this very plainly, though doubts (I cannot but think them artificial) have been raised about it. He was well acquainted with individual Colossians; for example, with Philemon. But these friendships were probably made not by his going to their home at Colossæ, but by their coming to his great mission-station, Ephesus, during his long stay in the Asiatic province.

But whether he had seen them in their homes or not, they were very present with him in his heart's thought and love. They lived and moved before his inner eye; he "rejoiced, and beheld their order, and the steadfastness of their faith in Christ" (ii. 5). "Above the highest sphere they met," he and his disciples, where Colossæ and Rome were as if they were not.

Something there was which powerfully drew Paul to this remote band of believers, and drew them to him.

A wonderful something; the like of it had never been felt on earth before. It was a holy union, invisible but real; a sacred and strong freemasonry, so to speak, which began then, in those first days of the Gospel, to bind together the most distant, the most different persons, men of alien tribes, and tongues, and ranks; clasping them not only in one interest, but in one deep, warm, and happy love.

What was this wonderful uniting spell? It was the Lord Jesus Christ, and His Gospel. It was faith, that is to say, personal confidence in Him. It was the Risen Lord, and His hope laid up in heaven.

Down from above had come that salvation and that hope, to the world of sin and sorrow. It had touched the heart of a Jewish formalist here, and the heart of a heathen idolater here, and the heart of a pantheistic philosopher there; and there was a mighty, tender magic in those touches which drew those men into one brotherhood of souls. It made Romans and Jews, Barbarians and Greeks, young and old, free and bond, feel that their spirits met each other, and their hearts beat together. They were all "in Christ Jesus," and He was in them all. They all felt the sweetness of a holy joy in Him, and of a holy hope through Him. And that hope, with a magnetism of its own, drew them into brotherhood.

This Epistle to the Colossians is remarkably full of this delightful fact, the world-wide family love of the Gospel. In this Epistle Paul rejoices that the Gospel had begun to come "*to all the world;*" that its blessed truth was preached "*to all the creation under heaven;*" and that "the riches of the glory" of this secret, this mystery, was made known "*among the heathen.*" He thinks of his brethren whom he had not seen, and he prays for them that their

hearts might be "*knit together* in love." He rejoices that Christ for them is "all *in* all," so that in this happy company there is neither Greek nor Jew, slave nor free. Writing from his Roman prison, he sends to Colossæ the affectionate greetings of saints around him there. And lastly, to come back to the text, he speaks of his thankful prayer for them all. He tells them how what he knows about them is his joy and pleasure, though he had never seen them, at least as a society. He lets them know that it is the most precious possible news to him that they have faith towards the Lord Jesus, and love to all the saints, "because of the hope laid up for them in heaven."

I call for full attention to this phenomenon of the Colossian Epistle, to this fact, brought out so powerfully in its pages, of the union of the saints in faith, love, and hope. Shall we put it aside as a matter of course? Is the allusion to it a trite, a threadbare observation? Ah, not so. It may be obvious to our notice, but it cannot be worn out for our hearts. It is a truth that wears well, and bears perpetual using, and gets brighter in the soul with use; this truth that the Gospel, with its one Lord and its one hope, tends directly to bind believing hearts in one. Many influences blind our sight to the reality and glory of that fact. Sometimes false notions of unity prejudice people against the conscious enjoyment of the unity which is true. But more often, surely more often far, the old dull weight of this present evil world lies on the Christian's soul, and checks the joy he ought to feel, as he finds himself no lonely pilgrim, but one of a great and happy multitude who share together this hope laid up for us in heaven.

So it is not useless to bespeak your thoughts for this precious subject. Come, let us think together of this binding power of the one hope set before us; of the collecting, concentrating power of the heavenly prospect which is in Jesus. Ponder this "love" which the Colossian believers "had to all the saints *because of* the hope laid up for them in heaven."

For observe here, at once, that this is the true point of the verse. Such is the meaning of the Greek; "*because of* the hope." The "*for*" of our English version does not mean, as we might think, "with a view to attain it;" it means, "on account of its existence," on account of its glorious reality. The hope is named here as the warm animating motive, the living mainspring. The hope was the power which called out the love. Because of the hope, they felt and showed the love.

Now, what was the hope, this hope laid up for them in heaven? Look at a few passages in the Epistle for the answer. (i. 22) It was the hope of their being presented hereafter holy, unblamable, unreprovable, before the Lord. (i. 23) It was the hope "of the Gospel," a hope revealed by the glad message of Christ. (i. 27) It was the hope of glory. (iii. 1) It was the hope of the things above. Such was this hope, this expected thing, to the Colossians. It was a prospect of heavenly glory; for it was deep among the things above, far in the pure region of triumph, and perfectness, and praise; in the heavenly home. It was a hope, above all things, in which Christ was first and last. (i. 27) "Christ in them was their hope of glory." (iii. 1) Their "affection," the drift and bias of their souls, was set on things above, because there was Christ, sitting at the right hand of God. (iii. 3) It was a hope which looked with holy eager-

ness for the Return of Christ, as the dawn of glory; "when Christ, who is our Life, shall appear." He filled the prospect. He *was* the prospect. The hope was laid up in heaven, just because in heaven was Christ; Christ was their Life, and Christ was there. He was their Treasure; so where He was, there were their hearts also. He was already in them, as their Life of grace. He was hereafter to appear to them, as their Life of glory. They looked *up*, and Christ was there. They looked *on*, and Christ was there.

Such was the hope as to its essence. And being such, it was in their hearts no mere perchance, no venture on the unknown, no wavering "it may be so." True, the full-blown flower was yet to come, but the plant was already rooted, and growing. Christ their Hope was already their Life. He was theirs now, as well as to be theirs then. So they had the hold of a deep and lawful assurance on their coming glory. Theirs, in short, was a Scriptural hope; "sure and steadfast; making not ashamed." For it was wholly built on Christ, and wholly looked for Christ.

Then, again, it was a *social* hope; not solitary, but social. It was for them not only one by one, but for the happy band all together. What says the text? It is "laid up *for you*" in heaven. "*Ye shall appear* with Him in glory," an assembled company. One great ingredient of its joy was to be this; it should be a supreme gathering-time; "our gathering together unto Him."[1]

I am intent to leave this thought with you; the hope was a hope "shared and shared alike." They looked forward *together*. Their longing eyes met upon that radiant point. They were drawn together by that glowing prospect —their final and eternal bliss, ushered in by the return of

[1] 2 Thess. ii. 1.

Jesus from the heavens, and bound up with Him for evermore.

Such was, at Colossæ, the animating cause of the love felt by saints for saints. Christians everywhere were dear to the Colossian brethren, because of this hope laid up for them in heaven.

Let us count up some of the causes which made it right, and natural, and necessary that it should be so. Let us think in some directions how the hope came to have, at Colossæ, this great binding power. And of course, in speaking of Colossæ, I speak also of Cambridge. I keep to the special lines of the Colossian Epistle to point our thoughts a little better. But what was true for these old Christians, in eternal things, is true for us. We know, indeed, no more about eternity and its influences than they did. But we know no less. For us now who believe in the Lord Christ Jesus, the glory of eternity and its certainty are the same as for them; and its power, its fruit, may be, must be, the same likewise. Shall we not resolve before God this hour that, by His grace, by His promised Holy Spirit, it shall be so? Will not any here who do not yet know the hope wake up at last to the intense desire to find it? Shall not we who do know it wake up anew to the will, and prayer, and expectation to live in the light of the hope laid up in heaven?

Well, then, to take up the thought in hand. The Colossians were bound in blessed love to "all the saints" on account of the hope. How was it so, and why?

First, because that hope was a great possessing *joy*. It cheered them, and uplifted them, indescribably. A few years before they had been living the life of the heathen

world, "without God and without hope." Now they felt themselves—what a change!—"strengthened for all long-suffering with joyfulness." They could not help "giving thanks to the Father who had fitted them for the inheritance." Into their sad hearts, into their withered lives, had come this strong surprising joy. Now here already was a secret of love. For joy has naturally an expanding power upon the heart. Sorrow tends to shut in the soul upon itself. Joy lifts the feelings, and warms them into kindliness and good will. So it is certainly with spiritual joy; the gladness of a view and sense of our own salvation tends straight to unselfishness; if it is right, if it is real, it is sure to bring an enlarging love for the souls of others. Do none of you know by experience what I mean? Perhaps, you know not how, you have been lately revived out of spiritual decline. Or you have gained a quite new view of the glory of Christ, and of the holy reality of eternity. Then you cannot help a warm longing that those you love, or perhaps those whom before you did *not* love, may find it too. You think of them, you pray for them, you speak to them, you write to them, because your heart is with them; and that is so, because Christ is with your heart. And as for those who already know and love Him, you find and feel an instinct of sympathetic interest in them, and fellowship with them. They share your joy; they are travelling to your home.

This holy instinct was abroad at Colossæ. The blessed hope was warm in the hearts of believers there. Therefore, by the expanding power of joy, they were enlarged to love all the scattered sharers of the hope.

But, again, there was in the hope another thing, a quite different thing, which also bound them to their fellow-

saints. I mean the *limits* of the hope. It was not accepted by all men. Few of a city, few of a family,—alas, that was the mysterious phenomenon. The joyful believer, indeed, felt his heart wonderfully enlarged to care for all men, and to pray for all men. But he looked round on facts, and he saw that as a fact only some followed the hope of eternal life. Perhaps he could easily count his brother-Christians at Colossæ. Anyhow, he sadly knew how far more numerous than they was the indifferent or angry unbelieving community around them. So towards his brother-Christians he felt the binding power of the thought that they were a little flock in a wilderness-world. They all had the home in view; but also they all had the foe around the path, and upon it. And the enemy was the enemy—just because of the heavenly hope. The saints were not of the world. Why? Not because they hated the world, or would have no dealings with it. No, but because they so plainly had a different set of aims, and choices, and motives than those of the world; because so plainly they had a power in them, a purpose, and patience, and love, alien from the world, and above it, and beyond it. Therefore they could not but draw together. Each knew of each that he might be at any time an object of wonder, or scorn, or outrage, on account of the hope. So they closed their ranks, and drew together on the march.

Take an illustration from the history of our own Church. In the early days of the English Reformation, a gifted group of young believing students, trained at Cambridge, were transferred to Oxford by Wolsey, who knew their scholarship but not their faith; and there they first sowed the new-found light of the reopened Scripture. The storm of persecution soon broke upon them. Then, in a new

sense, they realized their brotherhood. "Brethren we truly were," writes one of them, Francis Dalaber; "for so did we not only call one another, but were to one another in very deed."

It was thus with the Colossian saints. Their hearts were drawn together by that sense of partnership in trial which often makes the strongest partnership of all. The fact of an unbelieving and sometimes actively hostile world around them drew together their hearts in love.

Then, again, take up that last word. They were not only drawn together, but—in love. Human wills may be powerfully drawn together, yet without love. A common interest, a political interest, for example, or commercial, may bind together men between whom it would be idle to say there is the least affection. But if the common interest is this glorious thing, the hope which is Christ, and which is laid up in heaven, then that bond, where it is felt at all, must be, of course, a bond of love. For the hope is a hope instinct with love; it is the gift of God's love; it is the revelation of God's love. It is possessed only by those hearts which know at least something in their own experience of that love of God which is commended to us in this, that "while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."[1] Love goes out unto all the saints, by reason of that hope laid up, by the Lord of love, as the gift of love, to be enjoyed through an eternity of love, in heaven.

And this is so, above all, because of the personal nature of the Hope. I mean that the Hope is rooted in a glorious Person, centred in a Person, identified with Him, even with "the Lord Jesus Christ, who is our Hope."[2]

[1] Rom. v. 8. [2] 1 Tim. i. 1.

Heaven—what is heaven to the believer? Heaven is no mere expanse of dazzling scenery. It is no mere region echoing with rapturous songs. It is not merely a prospect of a city of light, and fields of rest, and everlasting hills. Heaven, first and last, is the unveiled presence of the Lord. It is to be with Him where He is. It is to behold His glory. It is to have Him who sitteth on the throne dwelling amongst us. That prospect, be sure of it, and that only, is what we can firmly grasp as "incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away."[1] Immortality, to be happy, needs the elixir of the presence of the King. Without that, the very thought of endlessness would oppress us; the pleasures of any paradise would languish at last, without that, into an eternity of fatigue, into a load of living death. But "the name of the City is, The Lord is there."[2] And the very life of our spirit, of your conscious, happy, immortal being, O believer in Christ, who now struggle with the trials of the way, will be to behold, with all the powers of your glorified nature, *His glory*. Shall not that prospect act on you as it did on the Colossians? Shall it not endear to you those who are also on the way to it? Soon they will stand beside you in the experience of that Presence. Must they not, therefore, by that one fact, be placed close to your heart to-day? Yes, you must needs have love to all the saints, on account of that hope laid up in heaven, on account of "Christ, who is, in you," and also in them, "the hope of glory."

I can only trace the outline of this great subject. I do not even wish to touch now the trying questions which affect the boundaries of the visible Church. I do not

[1] 1 Pet. i. 4. [2] Ezek. xlviii. 35.

speak of terms of membership, of organization, of ministry. Great indeed is the importance of Church order. It is by no means *no difference*, as to our edification and our usefulness, to what ecclesiastical body we belong. But I now point to a principle which affirms that while such things are great, there are things greater. The question of my Church is sacred; but it is not on the same level with the question of my Lord. The first matter for my soul, and the last, is, how do I stand towards Him? And no true principle, no real duty as to others, will ever be against the duty and the joy of finding something to love in the heart that at least loves Him; because the hope laid up for us in heaven is there.

We may faintly imagine the realities of a time of persecution for Christ's sake; some time of warrants, and arrests, and prisons, and cruel deaths inflicted on those who share this hope, and because they share it; some time when the cords of a present fear and a coming glory bind together a multitude of otherwise separated souls; when one dungeon, or one scaffold, or one martyr-pile, collects in one embrace of faith and hope the small and great, the weak and strong, the peasant and the scholar, the prince and the workman, the titled lady and her sewing-maid, the sectary and the churchman; all driven together by one great enemy, all clasped together by one Lord; dear to each other as fellow-sufferers, fellow-conquerors, fellow-heirs of the hope laid up in heaven. Such times have been; and it is helpful to study them often. Quite possibly this world will see such times again, under new developments of the great evil energy. But our own concern is with the practical present; and for

the practical present, for to-day, for to-morrow, let us remember that such outbursts of Christian love are but the glorious signs of an abiding principle; the community, in Christ, always and everywhere, of believing souls; a community quickened by the glory where they soon shall gather; a love unto all the saints, on account of the hope laid up for us in heaven.

CHRIST ASCENDED, THE LIGHT OF THE UNSEEN

CHRIST ASCENDED, THE LIGHT OF THE UNSEEN

Preached in the University Church, Cambridge; Ascension Day

"For we walk by faith, not by sight."—2 Cor. v. 7.

There is no direct connexion between this text and the great Commemoration of to-day. No beaten track leads us hence to the secluded heights that look eastward over Bethany, to the last assembly of the Apostles round their Lord, and to His withdrawal upward out of sight. It is not of the Ascension that St Paul is treating here, nor is it of the Ascension particularly that I ask you to meditate with me to-day. Certain and solid fact, sacred and pregnant mystery, we salute it, and we worship. We feel and grasp its fitness, its necessity, as the one possible sequel of the Resurrection. We handle the firm texture of contemporary truth in the narrative, in which the extreme economy of attendant wonders is a sure sign of the absence of mythical alloy. We hail in the Ascension the visible pledge of the Lord's own great joy and triumph in the heavenly world,—dear thought to the soul of His disciple. We welcome in it the assurance for ourselves of all the blessings of His Headship, His Intercession, His enthroned and royal Priesthood; and the evidence of the

ultimate and entire glorification through Him of our own being, spirit, soul, and body—that complex unity, which carries latent in the story of its first creation the truth that it is meant, not in a part only, but in its whole, for immortality and heaven. But it is not for these more direct contemplations that I invite you to-day to the place of the Ascension. It is not to gaze upon the act, to watch the Lord as He retires above. It is to muse around the spot, as it were, just after the event, when the supernatural is hushed again into the natural. There let us think a little while, with the Apostle's word before us, on one or two truths related less to the Ascension itself than to that world unseen and eternal to which it directs the believer's heart and hope.

Two aspects of the truth of life and immortality illuminated by the Gospel, I lay here before you, as we meet in spirit upon the holy Hill. By the grace of God may we view them aright; looking to His Word for our evidence and our information, and opening its pages as in His presence.

I will speak first of the Christian's right and duty, according to the Scriptures, to maintain, in his life below, an "affection," a tendency and tone of thought, "set on things above." I will speak secondly of the Scriptural revelation of the Christian's immediate blessedness, as he passes at death out of life below into the Unseen.

1. First, then, we will remind ourselves concerning the presence and maintenance of a heavenly mind in this our earthly life. "*We walk by faith.*" I take this positive clause of the text alone, that it may speak its positive truth. Whatever it is that we do not walk by,—we who belong to

Jesus Christ,—we walk by faith. We *walk;* we pace the track of duty and of suffering; we set out morning by morning upon the day's stage of travel; we move up and down among our fellow-travellers, to work, to help, to serve, to be and to do for them what we can, as we and they advance from horizon to horizon on the road. The Christian walks; he does not fly. His tread is upon the solid earth, upon the steeps and in the valleys of this present life; upon its stones and sands, as well as upon the oasis-meadow, when that comes. Just in proportion to the genuineness, to the primitive and original cast, of his Christianity, he applies himself with unaffected attention to this moment's claims of homely duty, and all the more when those claims come altogether from the side of his neighbour's interests and not his own. Yes, but he thus walks *by faith.* His activities and serviceableness are from one side perfectly natural, as he lives in true contact with the waking realities of human life. But from another side they are supernatural all the while, for the regenerate man is supernaturally conditioned and related. He is joined to Him who is invisible, with a conjunction that has to do with his whole being. "He lives his life in the flesh by faith in the Son of God, who loved him and gave Himself for him," and is his "righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption," and "ever liveth to make intercession for him," and "dwells in his heart by faith," and "manifests Himself to him as He doth not to the world," and "will come again to take him to Himself."[1] He perseveres as seeing Him, whom yet he has not seen, but whom he shall yet see as He is. He

[1] Gal. ii. 20; 1 Cor. i. 30; Heb. vii. 24; Eph. iii. 17; John xiv. 3, 21.

thinks so highly of the present because of the eternal, to which it is as the seed-grain is to the summer harvest. He thinks so reverently of man, because of God. To him nothing is alien that is truly human, just because he sees in man so very much more than meets the eye; at once a profounder loss and need than the non-Christian can discern, and a grandeur and glory far beyond that affirmed of man by the most flattering of philosophies. For it is the glory of the being created in the divine image; unable indeed, totally and guiltily, to reverse its own fall and ruin, yet capable, through the Cross and by the Spirit, of life and majesty eternal. So does the Christian man view man; and not man in the abstract only, but men in the concrete. His interest in them is very different from that of the philosopher who dreams that he has refuted the faith, and then proceeds, not inconsistently, to deliberate about the general suppression, the "elimination," of the human lives ascertained by his tests to be "unfitted for survival." To the Christian, who walks by faith, the lowest savage, and the worst victim of modern decivilization, is still dignified by the fact of the redemption of our nature through the Lord's blood, and the possibility of the divine regeneration of even that poor degraded personality by the power of the Holy Spirit. And for himself, meanwhile, as he plods the path of "service of his generation by the will of God,"[1] in union with His Son, the present is perpetually refreshed and vivified from the blessed future, a future at once congenial with the inmost life of the present, and offering a blissful contrast to all its outer accidents. Each patient step draws him a little nearer to that Presence in which "there is fulness of joy, and pleasures

[1] Acts xiii. 36.

for evermore,"[1] and paramount among those pleasures, the pleasure of an experience in which he shall veritably see his Master, and serve His purposes for ever as they shall be served where action without friction shall be the law of the heavenly rest.

So the man walks by faith. Take out of his walk his faith, which is the very antithesis to credulity, and the difference for him will be practical indeed. Into the now formless void will disappear not only the fair idea of the things unseen, but the very substance, the very essence, of the noblest motive to the willing service of man on earth, and to a reverent jealousy over the duties of to-day.

We walk by faith. And such a life is the one life fully worth the living. Such a walk is the one walk that moves in true liberty along true certainty, making for a real goal.

"A life *for* the unseen, *through* the unseen," say the authors of *The Unseen Universe*, in their closing pages, "is to be regarded as the only perfect life." I am glad to quote that dictum not from the theologian but from the natural philosopher, earnest and resolute in his assertion of the just claims of his philosophy. For me the words, in the context of the whole book where they occur, are a rebuke to the misgivings of many a laborious Christian of our time, tempted, under the pressure of surrounding unbelief (a pressure not the less heavy because it has more and more in it of the dead weight of a mere mental fashion), to drop out of the avowed programme of his work for men, and sometimes out of his own conscious sense of motive, the reasons and the hopes of heaven. Let it be so with us no more, if it is in any measure so at present. We walk, if we walk aright, by faith.

[1] Ps. xvi. 11.

Need I remind you, as we close this first fragment of contemplation, how full the New Testament is of the large truth expressed in the text? If I do so, it is that I may point out along with it how very far the holy Book is from being full of only heaven. It is full of the present and of the visible; full of the charities of home; of the duties of the household and of the state; of the doing of right in common things between man and man; of my neighbour's rights on me, and of my obligations to my neighbour; of the call on me for a present and continuous sacrifice of self for the good of other men. But then it is full also, on the other side of all these principles, of a life for and through "Him that is invisible," and of the things not seen as yet. It glows with the truth of a reward in heaven; a salvation nearer; a blessed hope; a prospect of entire likeness in the eternal world to Him whose nature is already imparted to His disciple; a reaping of life everlasting from the field of time; a working out of a solid weight of glory through the sternest processes of grace to-day. "Therefore we labour, because we trust in the living God;" "Every man that hath this hope reposed on Him, purifieth himself, even as He is pure;" "We shall bear the image of Him that is heavenly; therefore be ye steadfast, always abounding in His work."[1]

2. I turn now, and the transition comes in natural order, to our other theme of meditation on the holy Mount. What does the sacred Scripture, the one informant here worthy of our real attention, tell us about the things which await the pilgrim when, walking by faith, he steps at length through the hour of death into what is now unseen?

[1] 1 Tim. iv. 10; 1 John iii. 3; 1 Cor. xv. 49, 58.

Be the answer what it may, the question comes home. For we all are on the way to die. And ever and anon, before our own hour comes, the beloved of our hearts, the desire of our eyes, the lights of our life, pass, or may at any season pass, through the gate of death, to be no more seen.

Two preliminaries to the collection of any Scriptural answer are obvious at once. In the first place, the information is sparing in quantity and guarded in terms. In the second place, the stress of the Scripture hope is undoubtedly thrown upon the Christian's bliss at resurrection rather than upon his bliss in death. I note these facts, and do no more with them.

Again, it is obvious that if we restrict ourselves, as we ought to do, to a Scriptural answer, two opinions concerning the middle state, for each of which, in the abstract and *à priori*, many things can be said, must be ruled out. One is that of a *Psychopannychia*, the soul's sleep and, as it were, abeyance through the intervital period. The other is that of a purgatorial discipline and pain. "For extinguishing the imaginary flames of popish Purgatory," says Archbishop Ussher,[1] "we need not go far to fetch water, seeing the whole current of God's Word runneth mainly upon this, that 'the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin;' that all God's children 'die in Christ;' and that such as die in Him do 'rest from their labours;' and, in a word, that they 'come not into judgment, but pass from death unto life.' And if we need the assistance of the ancient Fathers in this business, behold they be here ready with full buckets in their hands." And this last assertion Ussher proceeds to prove at large, shewing in an ample exposi-

[1] *Answer to a Jesuit.*

tion that even the practice of prayer for the Christian dead, apparent in the literature of the third and after centuries (a practice all the while, I venture to say, as the Church of England in her Homily *Of Prayer* says, undefended by Scripture), does yet by its real terms and conditions tell not at all as evidence for a belief in purgatorial pains. The primeval Christian's thought of his departed has no clearer mirror than that precious relic of the fourth century, the funeral hymn of Prudentius, *Jam mœsta quiesce querella.*[1] Have none of us felt its peaceful power as we have "bent us o'er the dead," our blessed dead who died in the Lord? "Weep not," it said to us; "this death is but life's renewal. Earth, take the dear deposit to thy charge, only till its Creator shall bid thee render up His image. And the pure soul meanwhile, whither has it departed to its rest? To Lazarus in the arms of Abraham; to the penitent who stepped with the Lord from the Cross to Paradise —Paradise now for ever opened to the faithful, ample Paradise with its avenue of light."

But I must not forget that our business is with the Scripture, to which alone Prudentius would have pointed for his proofs.

What does the Scripture say? It explains nothing, or next to nothing. The extreme mystery, or what must at least seem so to us, of unembodied consciousness and experience it does not attempt to solve. It does not speak distinctly, if at all, of any quasi-material envelope and vehicle of the spirit in its exodus. That point is open, so far as revelation goes. It says little, very little, of companionships in the separate state, and intercourse of souls with souls,—such company as throngs in prospect the

[1] Printed in Trench's *Sacred Latin Poetry*.

regions of resurrection. Not that it says nothing. There is one word of the Saviour's own, little noticed, but pregnant with delightful import, which intimates something of welcomes there, and immortal smiles, and "such embraces as are linked in bliss." The word I mean lies in that unlikely quarter, the parable of the Steward: "Make to yourselves friends . . . that when ye fail" (or "when *it* fails," when life with its stores sinks from you—words wholly alien to thoughts of resurrection) "*they may receive you* into the eternal tents."[1] Does not the imagery of the tent itself suggest the intermediate state and its transition? It is a dwelling still within curtains, though pitched on the hill of Zion; not yet an induction into the everlasting house.

But the open and unmistakable promises for the state after death collect and settle round another centre, which is indeed the only true *centre* for the believer's thoughts and hopes. "To-day thou shalt be *with Me;*" "*Lord Jesus*, receive my spirit;" "To depart and to be *with Christ*, which is far, very far, better;" better, let it be remembered, according to that wonderful context, not than the sorrows but than the very loftiest joys of the regenerate life; for it is better, says the Apostle, than "the life" which "to me is Christ." "They which sleep" are "laid asleep through Jesus" (ἐκοιμήθησαν διὰ τοῦ Ιησοῦ); they are "fallen asleep in Christ;" they died "in the Lord," and "to the Lord." "What shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall death? Nay, death is ours." And, to close the bright catena with the glorious context of our text to-day, what is it, according to the Scriptures, to "put off this tabernacle" and "to be absent from the

[1] Luke xvi. 9.

body"? It is ἐνδημῆσαι πρὸς τὸν Κύριον, "to go home, to get home, to the Lord."[1]

Memorable and reassuring phrase—to *get home* to Him! To the soul that knows Him, and is joined to Him, that unknown state is yet home, because of Him. No mere harbour, no lodging for the night, but home, the place where affections settle, and where they expand, and sun themselves in intimate sympathies and unanxious trust. Such is the Unseen to the dying disciple. It is no vague world of immaterial lights and shadows; it is home, home with the Lord.

But has our text itself nothing to say to our purpose? Yes, surely, if we will *invert*, as we may, its negative into the corresponding positive. Here and now (it reminds us), while we are at home in the body and absent from the Lord, "we walk by faith, not by sight." Therefore, by the implication of the whole surrounding thought, when we leave home in the body and get home to the Lord, *we walk by sight*, and not by faith. Not only in the hour of resurrection, but in the moment after death, *we shall see.* I attempt no vain theory of the *modus* of that seeing; but I am absolutely sure, looking at this word of God, that it will be an experience different, wonderfully different, different in kind, from faith. "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed;" yes, for they, as they step out of this life, shall see indeed.

True, there will be there, and for ever, occasion enough for an immortal exercise of faith. That world, let us be abundantly assured, will have its mysteries as well as this; its calls to the blessed to confide, to rely, as they

[1] Luke xxiii. 43; Acts vii. 59; Phil. i. 23; 1 Thess. iv. 14; Rom. viii. 35, 38, xiv. 8; 2 Cor. v. 8; Rev. xiv. 13.

worship before the throne. But the conditions will be gloriously altered. It will be a faith exercised under sight. It will be the confidence we feel in some immeasurably wiser friend while he carries out his plans in our presence, and our eyes are all the while upon his face, as against the sometimes trying efforts of a confidence in him exercised at a distance from him, and in spite of false rumours of his death, and amidst a thousand accusations and misrepresentations of his purposes and his actions.

Death, for the believer, for the follower of Jesus Christ, will be to go to Him, to see Him. We shall walk, amidst the trees of that deathless and sinless Paradise, by sight, not by faith. The disciplinary strain, having done its work, will cease. The rest, the sabbatism, having come to its season, will begin, and grow, and bear its fruit of bliss, and knowledge, and endless readiness for the exercise of the powers of the resurrection, in the vernal sunshine of that Sight, that Εἶδος, that most blessed and most beatifying "Object Visible."

CHRIST THE YEA AND AMEN OF PROMISE

CHRIST THE YEA AND AMEN OF PROMISE

Preached at Fordington, Dorchester

"For all the promises of God in Him are Yea, and in Him Amen."—2 Cor. i. 20.

Jesus Christ is the Gospel; and that in more than one sense and respect. He is the substance of the Gospel; for all its precious truths gather round Him, and draw their life and power from this wonderful, this living Saviour. He is also the proof of the Gospel, as St Paul reminds us here. He guarantees its truth, "the truth as it is in Him," in Jesus. What Jesus was, what Jesus did, is indeed the warrant of the absolute truth of all that Jesus said. Christians prize the words of Jesus, not only because they are pure words, because they are grand words, because they are loving and tender words, but because they are *His* words. They gaze on the blessed Speaker; they see in Him the Word made flesh, the dying Lamb, the risen Shepherd, the ascended Intercessor, the indwelling Life, the coming King; and they feel that the Speaker gives a divine preciousness to the thing spoken. Promises from His lips are no sweet sound only, whose mere beauty

can charm away sorrow or terror for a moment, but cannot cure it. They are far more than merely beautiful. They are eternally true. He speaks who came from eternity to die, who died, and is alive for evermore; the Son of the Father, the Christ of God.

Yes, indeed, Jesus Christ is the Gospel. Without Him the Gospel message would be an empty sound; it would have no substance, and no proof.

A Christian preacher, in his poor efforts to expound and bring home the Word of God, finds himself more and more compelled to gather everything he says around Jesus Christ. Every year's deepening experience of life, and of sorrow, and of the heart, every new sensation of the bitterness of grief, every insight into the deadlier bitterness of sin, forces him for himself to apply to the Lord Christ Jesus as to the one remedy. Slow is the preacher, too often, to learn his own lessons. But he *does* learn evermore, by the mercy of God, that the remedy for care, for grief, and for sin, *does* lie in the Lord Christ Jesus, and in Him alone; and that exactly in proportion as the soul by faith sees His grace and love, and dwells in the light of His pardon and peace, exactly *so* is the bitterest sorrow turned into welcome blessing, and the rebellion of the sinful heart really displaced by the obedience of Christ.

Yes, let us look unto Jesus, and come unto Jesus, if we would be happy, and if we would be holy. There is only one safe place to pitch our tent in for this life. It is between the Cross and the open Grave of Jesus Christ. All things shift and change and decay around us; but that place never. There settled, we are safe. We shall never be warned off. No march of revolution will ruin that blessed home. No stranger shall pass through that rich

and fair inheritance to spoil it. Happy they that know what it is to dwell there;

> "A region they 've found where true joys abound;
> To dwell they 're determined on that happy ground."

It is with this thought, the thought of the ceaseless need of Jesus Christ felt by the once awakened soul, that I come for a while now to the text. May the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of the Son of God, be with us, in loving mercy, and guide the preacher and his friends alike to the Lord Christ, who is our Life.

"All the promises of God in Him are Yea, and in Him Amen."

You will observe, just by the way, how striking is the manner of insertion of these words into the chapter. St Paul is not speaking in a set regular fashion here about the Saviour. He has been speaking about himself, and his missionary plans, and his mode of preaching. But he *cannot help* referring to the Lord. He glides, as if he could not stop his gravitation, from the other subject to Christ. He gladly turns off, to speak of the unchangeableness of Christ, and the fixed eternal certainty of His truth. Christ *overflows* everywhere into what Paul says. And in this we have a rich and beautiful illustration of the all-importance of Christ, the omnipresence of Christ, in every part of the Gospel, and in every part of His followers' lives.

But now, speaking thus of Jesus Christ, what does the Apostle say? "All the promises of God in Him are Yea, and in Him Amen."

The words may be slightly paraphrased and expanded, with a view to the Greek, and to bring out their meaning more distinctly:

"All the promises of God, all things that God the Father in His Word has promised, all have their pledge, proof, and warrant in the Son of God, Jesus Christ. He is the *Yea* with which they begin; He is the *Amen*, the *Verily*, with which they close. Would you know that they are true, each and all? Look upon Jesus Christ, and you have the living and all-satisfying proof that they are so. And then the result will be, glory to God, in us, through us, sent up by us, who believe the promise, because of its pledge in Jesus Christ."

"All the promises of God." So the verse opens. It points us upwards to the faithful Promiser; the Father of mercies, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Of Him no doubt the Apostle speaks here, as simply GOD. It is thus often; not that Christ Jesus is not also God, very God; but that the Father is the Father, the eternal Fount of the eternal Stream, the eternal Father of the eternal Son; and therefore, naturally and often, He is styled GOD, without further description. Let us in this one brief clause see something of His gracious glory. What is this Everlasting Father? Is He an unknown absolute Something, an eternal We-know-not-What? So some of old, and so some now, talk of the supreme Lord. But the Prophets say otherwise, Paul says otherwise, Jesus says otherwise. The Prophets say, in Isaiah's words, "He is the High and Lofty One, who inhabiteth Eternity;" but also, "He dwelleth with him that is of a contrite and humble spirit." Jesus says, "God loved the world, and so loved it that He gave His Son."[1] Paul, in the name of Jesus, says here, "He is the faithful Promiser; He loves us, He speaks to

[1] Isa. lvii. 15; John iii. 16.

us, He comes down to us in this tender intercourse; He gives promises, binding and engaging Himself to the poor sinful soul of His creature. All His promises are, in Jesus, Yea and Amen."

All too often we forget the riches of this truth; we lose sight of THE FATHER'S love. Perhaps in sincere anxiety not to forget that Christ is God, we think it a dim and distant truth when we hear that the Father Almighty loved, and loves, His Son, and the sinner, and the world. But here again the Bible tells a different story. It shows us the love of God the Father as the very source of our salvation in Christ Jesus. "This is My beloved Son; hear Him;" "He spared not His Son; He gave Him up for us all;" "The Father Himself loveth you, because ye have loved Me;" "By Him we have access to the Father;" "The Father, according to His abundant mercy, hath begotten us again to a living hope."[1]

To know the Father—through our Lord Jesus Christ, never apart from Him, but through and in Him,—this is the glorious privilege of those who have life through grace. "This is the life eternal, to know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent."[2]

> "Blest be the Father and His love,
> To whose celestial source we owe
> Rivers of endless joys above,
> And streams of comfort here below."

But, then, how does the text proceed? Remember, that in this very view of the Father's love, of His promising love, it cannot leave out Jesus Christ. I believe that it is,

[1] Matt. xvii. 5; John xvi. 27; Rom. viii. 32; Eph. ii. 18; 1 Pet. i. 3.

[2] John xvii. 3.

to a living Christian, next to impossible to think of the blessed Two apart; of the Eternal Father apart from Jesus Christ, of Jesus Christ apart from His Father. And no wonder, when we find that the Bible thus perpetually shews us the truth of the Father and the Son bound up, as here, together.

"All the promises of God—in Jesus Christ His Son is their Yea and their Amen;" their proof, their voucher of reality, is all in Him.

! How shall we ever give thanks enough for that mighty Guarantee? If we care for the promise, if we prize the promise, if we grasp the promise, greatly indeed shall we rejoice to be sure that nothing less than Jesus Christ is Seal and Signature to the "act and deed"!

Why is a proof of the promise, why is a Yea and Amen to it, so precious to the asking heart? Is it because we suspect the Eternal Father of untruth? No; the very ground of our minds must give way unless we firmly hold Him to be immovably true. It is because we know ourselves to be guilty, to be entirely unworthy of the least of His promises; and so, when He utters promises exceeding great and precious, the soul questions wistfully, "Can this be true *for me?* Have I heard it aright? Is there not some reserve behind? Surely there must be, not untruth with God, but mistake with me, when He seems to promise *me* so much."

Are there not some here who either feel or have felt somewhat thus? A keen penetrating sense, or even any *real* sense, of sin has a strange power to make us feel it wonderful that God should promise to such as we are anything but tribulation, and wrath, and anguish. Once awake to sin, once alive in conscience, we want *a solid proof* that

the King of Saints really says what He seems to say in the promise. And this longed-for proof, says Paul, we have: it lies in Jesus Christ; it *is* in fact Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Let me set this inestimable truth before you in one or two special instances. Let us take a few of the great promises of God, and in them as examples see what is meant by the Yea and Amen in Jesus of all the promises.

1. The promise of Pardon to the sinful soul. "I will love you freely;" "Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea;" "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more."[1] My brethren, the very freedom and fulness of this offer of God's forgiveness is that which often makes man doubt and hesitate, sometimes for long and weary years, whether it says what it seems to say; whether it may be accepted without reserve. Is it not clogged with exacting conditions? Must I not be holy before I can be welcomed? Must I not work all my life long before I can be accepted? When we think what acceptance is, and what sin is, we might well wonder thus, if it were not for the Yea and the Amen in Jesus Christ. But HE is there to prove that God means not little, but much; not reluctant toleration, but abundant mercy. How does He prove it? By the fact of Himself, by the fact of His work. God so loved the world of sinners that He did more than promise pardon —He gave His Son; nothing less than His Son. "He that spared not His own Son, but gave Him up for us all, shall He not with Him also FREELY give us" what is less than He, even full forgiveness and perfect peace, an

[1] Hos. xiv. 4; Mic. vii. 19; Heb. x. 17.

"acceptance" such as is "in the Beloved"?[1] Look at self, and you are right in despairing of pardon for *any* sin. Look to the Son of God, and your troubled soul may trust the promise of the pardon of *all* sin. Jesus stands there as the Gift of God, Jesus the Son. The invisible pardon becomes in Him as it were visible. You may trust it, because the Son of God came, and died, and lives. Let us act in humble simplicity on that Yea and that Amen.

2. The promises of Holiness, of an inner separation from serving sin, and a reception of divine power and purity into the heart. Here, indeed, the promise, in many a varying form, is magnificently full. "These things write I unto you, that ye sin not;" "Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not;" "Let not sin reign in your mortal body;" "As He which called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conduct."[2] How can all this possibly be?

> "Ah, how can this unready will
> At once, at every point, repel
> The heart's own traitors, aided still
> By energies of hell?"

It is impossible, except in Him who is at once the Yea of the promise, and the Amen of its fulfilment. The secret is not it, but He. "Christ is made unto us sanctification;" "Ye are filled full in Him;" "That Christ may dwell in your hearts, by faith; that ye may know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge."[3]

3. Next, and lastly, take the promise of Heaven. "He

[1] Rom. viii. 32; Eph. i. 6.
[2] 1 John ii. 1, iii. 6; Rom. vi. 12; 1 Pet. i. 15.
[3] 1 Cor. i. 30; Col. ii. 10; Eph. iii. 17, 19.

hath prepared for them a city;" "They seek a heavenly country;" "Our conversation is in heaven;" "We shall ever be with the Lord."[1] Oh, wonderful promise!

"Thrice blessed, bliss-inspiring hope,
It lifts the fainting spirit up,
It brings to life the dead."

Dear, holy hope! It is the light of the dying Christian's soul; it is the light of the Christian mourner's soul, in the midnight and desolation of a great bereavement. A life beyond death for ever; an indestructible home of holiness and joy, far off, and yet so near.

Yes; but how do we know it? Have we seen, have we reached, have we touched it? Even if we had, could we be sure that it is *for us*, for any but the greatest saints and sufferers? Could anything but a martyr's life and death purchase such an eternity? Aye, there are ten thousand difficulties in the way, apart from Christ. The question of the very existence of heaven, apart from Him, would be to us but a riddle and a dream. But in Him the promise is Yea and Amen, to every one that believeth. He has died; He has risen; He has shown Himself alive; He has gone up thither; He has promised to return and take to Himself there the youngest, feeblest soul that believes on Him. "When *Thou* didst overcome the sharpness of death, Thou didst open the kingdom of heaven to all believers." Thou didst let the light in on the kingdom. Thou didst open the gate into the kingdom. Heaven itself is a smaller gift than Thou, Lord Jesus Christ. He who gave Thee to the sinner will not refuse the City.

So it is with *all* the promises. They are not words only,

[1] Heb. xi. 16; Phil. i. 20; 1 Thess. iv. 17.

they are facts, in the Lord Jesus Christ. Hold Him, and indeed you hold them. "This is the promise that the Father hath promised us, even eternal life. And this life is IN HIS SON."[1]

Not long ago, in Further India, an aged Christian convert, a man of eighty years, a surviving disciple of Adoniram Judson's, was found dying, by a missionary visitor. His once strong mind was shaken by age and weakness; his thoughts failed and wandered; but when they were pointed to Christ, they settled and were clear again. When asked about his own faith in his Redeemer, his answer was strong in its simplicity: "*I have hold of Him with both my hands.*"

Brethren, once more to-day He offers to you, and to me, *His* Hand, His holy Self, for our hold, our grasp. By His grace we will take it; and then we may really claim to hold, for our own rightful and assured possession, all the promises of God.

[1] 1 John v. 11.

CHRIST REVEALED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

CHRIST REVEALED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

Preached in the University Church, Cambridge

"But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit."—1 Cor. ii. 9, 10.

I READ over to you these words, not to attempt a long exposition of text or context, but to set out from them on a brief excursion of thought, upon a subject which, at least, they powerfully suggest. That subject is the need, according to the witness of Scripture, that the human soul, if it is effectually to apprehend the power and the glory of the Gospel, should be visited and dealt with, in a sense strong and special, by an influence which indeed is not itself, the influence of the Holy Ghost.

As regards our starting-point, the text, let me only passingly remark upon its context and its phrases. Its context is the assertion of the Apostle that there is about the Gospel a hidden wisdom, an inner truth; and that this truth was invisible to the minds of those who rejected and crucified the Saviour; for, had they seen it, they would not have crucified Him. And then comes in the text, to prove

that such blindness of the soul was recognized long before in the Old Scriptures, as a mystery and a fact. The blindness of those who slew the Lord did but answer to what "was written"—that solemn formula of final appeal with the Apostles and their Master. Isaiah[1] had spoken of the acts of God in redeeming mercy as things beyond the reach of *à priori* discovery by human senses, and reason, and imagination. Man could receive them when revealed; there was that in man which could respond to them when revealed; but in order to that revelation there needed the action of the divine Spirit on the spirit of man. No record of facts, no witness of phenomena, without the special action of the Holy Spirit, could bring them home upon the heart. But to Christian believers, to Paul and his disciples, they were brought home. And it was so, not because their eyes or ears were keener than those of the Lord's executioners, or because their heart was more imaginative, or more sympathetic, but because the Holy Ghost had unveiled to them this wisdom, this esoteric wisdom and glory of the ways of God.

Such is the outline of the context. For the Apostle's quotation of the Prophet plainly refers to the whole gift of salvation, not only to the bright eternal future of the saved. The words cannot indeed exclude the thought of the glories of heaven, which assuredly senses have not seen, nor imagination either, but which God has prepared for them that love Him. But neither can they exclude the wonders of grace on earth; which equally are things of eternal plan and preparation, and which here stand nearest in connexion to the previous verse. For, according to that verse, it was not ignorance of the nature of heaven, but

[1] Isa. lxiv. 4.

ignorance of the nature of the Lord from heaven, which allowed the Crucifixion. It was above all things ignorance of HIM. Not ignorance of His existence, nor of a supernatural something that lay around Him, for these were things of admitted fact; but ignorance of Him. It was a failure of the soul, somehow or other, to grasp the "hidden wisdom" of His nature and His work. In short, the Apostle's citation of the passage, or passages, of the Prophet appears to bear upon the glorious total of redeeming mercy; not only, or mainly, upon glory, but also, and mainly, upon grace; as indeed it is the way of Scripture to bind the two everywhere into one strong series, and always to throw more emphasis and more illumination upon grace than upon glory; for grace is always less attractive to the imagination, and always more needful for the will.

The discovery of the ways of grace, then, had been beyond the reach of senses and of mind. "The salvation which is in Christ Jesus" had not entered into the human heart, any more than it had shone visibly upon human eyes, or poured music into human ears. The apprehension of it needed to be borne in upon the soul by the eternal Spirit. And by Him, to the Apostle and to his brethren, it had been so borne in. "God revealed them unto us by His Spirit."

One further remark, and one only, on the details of the text.

What is the personal reference of the word "us"—"God hath revealed them unto us"? The reference must be not to the Apostle or Apostles exclusively, but to the saints at large. The context leads naturally this way. For the "hidden wisdom," once hid but now revealed, of which

the Christian teacher spoke among his mature, or "perfect," hearers, has just been described as "foreordained before the world unto *our* glory;" the glory certainly not of the teachers only but of the believing community. And again, those who have received the revelation of it are contrasted, not with a lower grade of believers, but just with the unilluminated enemies and murderers of the Lord of Glory. Not the limited influence, then, which we describe as apostolic inspiration, but a work of the Holy One within the consciousness of all true believers, is at least mainly in question here. For "the saints" as such Paul asserts that *this* has happened; the wonder and splendour of redeeming grace, invisible to the senses, and out of the reach of independent thought, have been unveiled to them by God through His Spirit.

I have endeavoured, almost anxiously, to clear up what seems to me to be the main reference of the text. But I have no anxiety about what I would point to now, the vast concurrent witness of the New Testament to the truth which I take to be the main business of the text. Full and strong is the voice of the Gospel to this effect, that the power and the glory of its disclosures, their reality, their certainty, the majesty of their importance, the urgency of their needfulness, the repose of the hope of the Gospel and the animation of it too, if the heart is to apprehend these things effectually, must be brought home to that heart by an influence, by a visitation, by a Visitor and Teacher, who indeed is not the heart itself. God must unveil them through His Spirit.

Pass briefly with me over some of the many passages of the sacred Word which bear this way. And let me

ask my brethren to look at them in their own directness and simplicity. Hear them, as we would wish to hear Him who inspired the utterance of them. Hear them, not through the medium of interpretation, however venerable, or system, however vast and subtle. God forbid I should slight, by a whisper even, antiquity of belief and precision of system. But of this we may be sure, about antiquity and about system, that neither of them is for one moment meant to take the edge off the divine Word in its application to the inmost conscience and the individual will. Church theory, to allude to that for a moment, was never meant to strike aside the sword of the Spirit. Calculation of what constitutes Church membership, and judgments of charity as to who actually are Church members, were never meant to check the self-examination of the soul, as it turns inward—with a judgment which dares not be that of charity, for it is the scrutiny of self upon self—and asks itself if the spirit-searching words of the Lord and the Apostles are echoed by regenerate reality within.

Then listen to the words of the Son of God Himself, and let in their whole appeal upon your soul. "No man knoweth the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him;" "It is written in the prophets, And they shall all be taught of God; every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto Me;" "The world cannot receive the Spirit of truth, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him; but ye know Him;" "He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me; and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and"—ponder well the closing promise—"will manifest

Myself to him."[1] "Lord," enquires an Apostle in his perplexity, thinking of a manifestation which eyes could see, and which could enter readily enough into the heart of man, "Lord, how is it that Thou wilt manifest Thyself unto us, and not unto the world?" And ponder well again that great response of Christ. He has nothing to say about apostolic inspiration, which was a thing apart altogether; He has everything to say about the inner history of the individual believer's soul, and about a divine indwelling in that soul: "If a man love Me, he will keep My words, and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him." I entreat again, as in the presence of our Lord, the whole attention of soul and conscience to those words. They are for us here and now. There is no fragment of a pretext here for tying down the Speaker's intention to an exceptional time, to an age of primeval miracles, and tongues, and prophecies, and healings. There is no excuse, again, for the thought that the great facts of ecclesiastical ordinance and order are to the main point here at all. The question is of an individual experience. The conditions are, love to the Redeemer, and the keeping of His words. Here is a promise of direct divine influence, and of distinct personal experience, and a promise for all time and for all true disciples.

And how perfectly in harmony this is with the narrative of the Acts, and with the Epistles, and the Apocalypse! From the Acts take one example. You read of Paul's first work in Europe. He sits teaching on a certain sabbath by the side of the river at Philippi, amidst the circle of female worshippers; and we are informed of one conversion;

[1] Matt. xi. 27; John vi. 45, xiv. 17, 21, 22, 23.

Lydia believed and was baptized. What had happened in her soul? No *mere* reception of information, however authentic, nor of inferences, however cogent, but an inner light from God; "Her heart the Lord opened, to attend to the things spoken."[1] Here again is a case fully in point to our enquiry of to-day. It is a case for all time. The element of miracle, in the ordinary sense, which might have seemed to restrict the significance to an exceptional period, is wholly absent: Lydia witnessed no miracle before, or at, her conversion, that we read of. Nothing could have been more perfectly natural in externals than that occasion. But from the point of view of Scripture it was supernatural as well. To be sure, Lydia listened with her own ears, and reflected with her own mind, and accepted with her own will; let us be very sure of that; but her inner being was drawn towards the Gospel, and made conscious of its glory, by a power not her own; it was God, revealing, through the Spirit. And the very simplicity of the narration, and the *obiter dictum* of this remarkable feature in it, commend this case to the enquirer into the ways of salvation as a wide-reaching example. The heart that effectually attends to the things which God has prepared for them that love Him, does not for one moment cease to be itself; it never thinks and feels with faculties, so to speak, imported and injected, if such things could be; no, but its perceptions and feelings take the divinely healthy line they do, thanks to a divine power, strong and special, which has been at work upon the inner world; "that heart, the Lord hath opened."

Pass to the Epistles, and you find the same indications

[1] Acts xvi. 14.

of this celestial phenomenon, this immortal flower in the lower wilderness, the direct influence of God, of His Spirit, upon the soul, revealing the glory of the things prepared. We read, in a well-known context, that "the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the sons of God."[1] Yes, the conscious utterance upward of the filial love of the believing soul is met, not by an echo from the desert rocks, the mere reflection of itself, but by a Voice downward, divinely independent, conveying assurances of the paternal Love of Him that is invisible. We find indeed the divine power, in this passage, present on both sides of that blessed intercourse; for it is the Spirit in the believer's heart that actuates the profound cry, "Abba, Father;" and it is the Spirit, in answer to that cry, who so "sheds abroad the love of God in the heart" (to use the words of another passage not far off), as to make it sure, with an indescribable intuition, that that cry is met, as well as prompted, by eternal kindness.[2]

Just so it is in the words close to the text; "We have received the Spirit which is from God, that we may know the things which are freely given to us of God." Just so it is again, in the words of the great companion Epistle; "God shined in our hearts, to the lighting up of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."[3]

In the Ephesian Epistle, as we might expect from its exalted tone of spiritual instruction and appeal, there is passage upon passage to our purpose. And, observe here again, the language leaves them open for perpetual application, for the attention and experience of every age of the Church; not a hint, not a shadow of a hint anywhere

[1] Rom. viii. 16. [2] Rom. viii. 15, v. 5.
[3] 1 Cor. ii. 12; 2 Cor. iv. 6.

appears that what we know as miraculous gifts are in the Apostle's intention here. All, all, is of the soul, the affections, the will, the experience of the disciple; all bears upon the believer as such, not on the believer as a worker of superhuman signs. Do you not recall that prayer of the great Missionary for his converts? "I make mention of you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him;" and then the prayer runs on into glorious detail: "The eyes of your heart being enlightened, that you may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe."[1] I deliberately quote at full length. All this, and nothing less than this, is the prayer of this inspired shepherd for his flock. It is a prayer for influences direct and divine upon their faculties of thought, and affection, and imagination. It implores for them that things already known, and truly known, and to no ordinary degree either (or the tone of the whole Epistle is beside the mark), may be known so very much better, in respect of grasp, and realization, and sacred joy, that the access of knowledge shall seem, compared with what went before, to be the first opening of dark eyes. "I beseech Thee, show them Thy glory; make Thy goodness pass before them."[2] That which eye had not seen, nor had it entered into the heart of man, was revealed to the Ephesian Christian by God, through the Spirit, if Paul's prayer was answered.

But there is a passage, if possible, richer and deeper still in the third chapter of this same celestial letter, this letter

[1] Eph. i. 15-19. [2] Exod. xxxiii. 18, 19.

of which it has been said that it moves as with the wide sweep of angelic wings, and, essaying ever and again to touch the earth in the details of precept, is wafted still aloft into the region of the eternal truths. It is an often quoted passage, but who can hear such words too often? "I bow my knees unto the Father;"—yes, see the old Apostle kneeling, in his Roman lodging, and listen, as perhaps sometimes the Prætorian sentinel with astonished curiosity listened, to such words going up from human lips to an unseen but living Sanctity: "I bow my knees unto the Father, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in your inner man, that Christ may take up His dwelling in your hearts through faith; that, being rooted and grounded in love, you may be invigorated to grasp, with all the saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ."[1] Is this the turgid effusion of a rhetorician at his exercises? It is the well-weighed intercession of an Apostle. It is the utterance of the Chosen Vessel, and it carries with it the authentication of His Master. And it asks at large for this same supernatural influence upon the inmost realities of perceptions, and affections, and will. Not for exceptional saints, but for all true disciples to whom those presents should come, it supplicates that God through His Spirit would so interpose amidst the workings of the inner man that the Saviour, already known indeed, and loved, and served, might yet take such developed possession of the soul that it might be likened to the first arrival of the Prince at His permanent abode. And the thought of the Apostle for the saints of Ephesus is echoed by the utterance of the Lord Himself, in

[1] Eph. iii. 14–19.

His glory, to the Seer at Patmos: "I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me."[1]

I have grouped together a large miscellany of Scriptures, large, yet most inadequate to the completeness of the subject. And I am well aware how much more was to be said, even in barest outline, upon each one; and again how passage differs from passage in certain respects of application; how some, for example, deal with the first step of the unveiling work, and how others, and those the majority, deal with its after stages. But I claim for all my quotations that they are to the point so far as this, that they present to us, as a ruling phenomenon of the Gospel, that it offers openly and amply to the soul of man, to the soul enquiring and to the soul believing, the grant of an Interposition, a Visitation, a Visitor, eternal and divine; able, infinitely able, to touch, and adjust, and illuminate, the whole inner world, and to bring the man acquainted, not in theory but in experience, not in covenant but in realization, which is a different matter, with the things of God's grace which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor heart conceived; with the glory of Christ, with the peace of God, with the guidance of the Spirit, with the personal prospect, the solid, sober, but most blissful prospect, of a glorious resurrection and the heavenly life to come.

These Scriptures, these wonderful Scriptures, all with one voice imply that this work is absolutely needful; that though man's thought, affections, conscience, and will are perfectly real, yet they are hopelessly inadequate, by the depravation, the distortion, of the Fall, to grasp by their united efforts the realities of the Grace of God.

[1] Rev. iii. 20.

These Scriptures all with one voice testify on the other hand that the celestial influence they offer, when it works indeed, will work not by the intrusion of new faculties into the soul, but by the indwelling of the Divine Guest amidst the original faculties, and by His action through those faculties; and that therefore the humble aspirant for this great gift of God will not indolently wait for a sudden sensation of new powers, which shall supersede his watching and his will, but will watch and will all the more diligently, while he prays, because it is through nature that the supernatural will exert itself. "God will work," yet not out of us, but "in us,"[1] and so will work as that *we* shall will, and *we* shall see, and *we* shall love. Yet meanwhile, to return to our first and main theme, the Worker will so operate that the soul shall own that a power not itself is in the matter; that a hand not its own has lifted the veil, and manifested Christ.

I have designedly been silent on many a question that pressed in from the side for notice. I have sought reverently to avoid, so far as possible, questions about the mode of conveyance of special grace upon which believers in Revelation may not agree. I have omitted, less intentionally, to point out the profound difference, in the idea of Scripture, between conscience, which is universal, and grace, which is special, and of which the supremely special work is to bring the soul into contact with its Redeemer.

My aim has been throughout to collect and present together some fragment at least of the Scripture testimony to such propositions as these:—

That the human soul, without a special divine assist-

[1] Phil. ii. 13.

ance, is helpless to know God, with that inner knowledge which is life eternal;

That such an assistance is a revealed reality, permanent, accessible, and infinitely desirable;

That there is indeed a Holy Ghost, and an illumination by the Holy Ghost; and that the Eternal Father indeed gives, as He has promised to give, His Holy Spirit to them that ask Him.

"*To them that ask Him.*"[1] Brethren, I venture, before I close, to point to those sacred words. In this venerable place the preacher dares not be less than an ambassador for Christ. He must appeal here, in the name of His Master, to your conscience, affection, will; and so I will even do. We have reviewed the utterances of Jesus Christ and of His saints, on a very great subject. The exposition may again and again have gone astray, as of course it was inadequate throughout. But have not the divine words themselves left at least a golden residuum of infinitely desirable truth and life? And are there any here who, whatever may be their theory of religion and of its ordinances, at least know that nothing in their experience answers to this illumination cast upon Christ, and God, and Heaven, and who do own to themselves that it would be well, if it is to be had, to have it? I appeal to all such, not to silence that admission. I ask them not to accept any lower substitute for the divine reality, for such it is, of the thing they fain would see. I beseech them to take the words of the Redeemer, and give them a trial; "He shall give His Holy Spirit to them that ask Him."

How the answer will come, I do not know. It may

[1] Luke xi. 11.

come like the lightning. It may come like the dawn. It may come to you, as it came, not many years ago, to a famous scholar at Oxford, with a sudden but permanent impression, in the midst of books and studies, of the overwhelming reality of eternal things. It may come as it came to a deeply earnest but not yet enlightened Anglican pastor, a century ago, with a sudden sense of the wonder of those words on the page of the Greek Testament, *τὸν ἀνεξιχνίαστον πλοῦτον τοῦ Χριστοῦ*, "the unsearchable riches of Christ." It may come first, as some men well know it can come, in the merciful anguish of conviction. It may come, as it has come to others, in such "a rush of love to God and Christ" as Arnold felt in his closing days, or as Zinzendorf felt when he looked, in the midst of his brilliant youth, on that picture of the Crucifixion. It may come (it *will* come, and will work, ultimately, if it is real) in the rising progress of a life lived in daily patience "by faith in the Son of God;" in an animation to every duty, in an elixir poured into the inmost will, in a light upon the written Word, upon precept as well as promise, shed from the realized presence of a living Saviour. It may come in this way or in that. But, however, it will come. It is real. It is promised. "Though it tarry, wait for it." Not in indolence, but in diligence, wait FOR IT. For the Father, so the Son has promised, shall give His Holy Spirit to them that ask Him.

CHRIST AND HIS MEMBERS UNITED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

CHRIST AND HIS MEMBERS UNITED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

Preached in the University Church, Cambridge, on the Sunday after Ascension Day

"And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four living beings, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth."—REV. v. 6.

I HAVE no intention of explaining in any detail this great text, with its mysterious and magnificent context. Such an effort would be out of place on a single occasion of exhortation. All that I do in the way of prefatory exposition shall be to justify my choice of the text for this present Sunday, the Sunday after the Ascension Day and before the Day of the Holy Spirit.

The mystical scene before us is the appearance of the Lord, once sacrificed, and now Conqueror, in the heavenly sanctuary; at, and then upon, the heavenly throne. It is the Ascension, it is the triumph of the Lord ascended, shown to us, in sign and symbol, from the point of view of heaven. It is a new fact and phenomenon in the holy region. A Figure suddenly rises upon that field of view, fresh from sanguinary death and consequent victory, One who receives then and there from the numberless assembly

who behold Him not songs only but a new song, not praise only, not adoration only, not only everything of acclamation and supplication which can attest His Deity, but also and all the while the special blessings of His worshippers because He has been slain, and has wrought redemption by His blood.

It is our Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God and Son of Man, recent from the altar and the sacrifice, ascended to His Father.

Again, the scene connects itself with the truth of Pentecost. The Lord of Propitiation, of Redemption, is seen here as the immediate Fountain-head for earth, the sacred point of radiation downward, of the sevenfold Spirit. To the Spirit, I venture to say, refer not only the seven mystical Eyes, but the seven Horns, the symbol of perfect spiritual power. But however, the seven Eyes are expressly said to be the Seven Spirits of God, and the Seven Spirits not now as the eternal Lamps before the throne, but as "sent forth into all the earth," into every kindred and nation, into the unnumbered multitudes of a Universal Church, to be the divine Vehicle of the ineffable nearness, the intuitive presence, the holy indwelling, of the Lamb.

So the ascended Lord of the Cross and Passion, and the descending Paraclete, who makes and ministers the presence of the Lord with His own below—the glory of Ascension and the glory of Pentecost—converge here in the apocalyptic vision. It is indeed a close convergence. The Spirit, who has just spoken in the seven Epistles of the Book as the Voice of Jesus Christ, here appears as His very Eyes. Inherent in Him, if I may dare to say so, in an unutterable union of being, and harmony of will, and order of working, He is sent forth by Him, He radiates out from Him. Where

He looks and works in all the earth, it is as from Jesus Christ; it is as for Jesus Christ. It is as Witness to His glory, as attraction to His Person, as conveyance of His presence.

"If I depart," said the Lord, "I will send to you the Paraclete." "He being by the right hand of God exalted," said the Apostle, "did shed forth This." [1]

Such is my introductory explanation. The message I take from the passage, thus interpreted, is simple in form and direct in purpose. I wish to speak to you of our Union by the Holy Spirit with our exalted Lord; of the life of the true members in their Head, through this Divine Life-giver; their Head being the Lamb that was slain.

May grace and mercy, by the promised Spirit of the Son, be upon us as we go. Without Him nothing is spiritually strong, and true, and holy. As much here as in the village church, as in the little mission-room, as by the sick-bed, as by the bed of death, He must speak, if man's spirit is to hear. He, the Eyes of Jesus Christ, must look virtue here upon our blindness, if in things spiritual we are to see.

Now, the Union of Christ with His people, and of them with Him, is a thing which may be described, in the light of the New Testament, as not only a great truth of spiritual life, but the truth of truths. It is related to all other kindred doctrines as that which combines, harmonizes, and explains them. It appears as the end where they appear as means. Hither they gather and converge. Is it repentance? Is it faith? Is it regeneration? Is it justification of the person? Is it sanctification of the nature, the will, the affections, the life, the self? All stands related to this

[1] John xvi. 7; Acts ii. 33.

holy Union. Is the spiritual condition of the individual in question, or that of the Christian community? (And the impartial and far-reaching doctrines of the Faith never forget the community in the individual, nor the individual in the community.) Alike the ultimate reference is to the holy Union. The eternal plan, the divine working out of the plan in the history of the soul and of the Church, bear always in this direction—towards the consummation of this holy Union. What is "the Fulness of Christ," in the Epistle to the Ephesians?[1] It is the final and glorious realization of God's Idea of the Union of His Son and the people of His Son. Need I remind you at length of the richness of the imagery employed in Scripture to set forth this astonishing and uplifting truth? Need I speak at length of the Head and the members, of the Vine and the branches, of the Bridegroom and the bride? Need I speak of the Temple, with its living stones, and its life-giving Stone of the corner? Need I dilate upon the precious truths of the Indwelling, that blessed mutuality of indescribable connexion under which the Lord is said to dwell in His saints, to dwell in their hearts,—and they in Him?[2] Or of that other range and region of truth, somewhat neglected in the Church of to-day, but none the less permanent and less certain, in which the Christ stands forth as the Head, and Representative, and Surety of His people, in the field of Covenant,[3] receiving for them, that He may minister to them, all the acceptance won by His merits, as well as all the life, and power, and sanctity embodied in His Person? It is

[1] Eph. iv. 13.

[2] See *e.g.* John xv. 1–8; 2 Cor. vi. 16; Eph. ii. 19–22, iii. 14–17, v. 30.

[3] See *e.g.* Heb. vii. 22, viii. 6.

enough for my purpose to-day thus to recount the heads and titles of this great truth of truths; only saying, as we pass on, with all the earnestness that I can command, and I humbly think with entire sincerity before Him of whom I presume to speak, that "this thing is for our life." It is no mere topic of disquisition, no antiquarian curiosity of religious thought. It has to do with spiritual life and spiritual death. It discloses things which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor heart conceived, concerning the peace, and strength, and growth, and purification of the whole being of man; but which God hath revealed by His Spirit. Of these things it must be blessed to be the humblest partaker. Of these things it must be woeful to fall short, even by the narrowest interval of privation. "If any man be in Christ, it is a new creation. If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His."[1]

That word, "the Spirit of Christ," brings me to what is special in our present theme. It reminds us of Him who is the earthward Eyes of the exalted Lamb; as it were His effluent Presence for the Church below. It tells me, that ninth verse of the eighth chapter to the Romans, that the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the man is for that man the presence of Christ. Read the sentences:[2] "Ye are in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His. But if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness." Wonderful equivalence and exchange! The Lord leaves not His disciple orphaned; He comes to him; He is in him; He manifests Himself to him, and abides in him. And yet it was expedient that He should go away;

[1] 2 Cor. v. 17; Rom. viii. 9. [2] Rom. viii. 9, 10.

for otherwise the Paraclete would not come.[1] The Paraclete comes,—and behold He mediates and makes for the Christian's soul and self a presence of the Lord which somehow is better, far better, for the man in this his pilgrimage and tabernacle than even the joy and glory, if it were granted, of his Saviour's corporeal proximity—shall I dare to say than his Saviour's personal indwelling as the Son of Man outside the vehicle of this presence of the Spirit?

This sacred mediation of the heavenly Spirit, this conveyance through Him of every blessing of the vital Union, appears everywhere in the subject. In the parable of the Vine and branches, indeed, He is not explicitly mentioned. But the context of the whole Discourse is so full of Him that He is assuredly implied as the life-bond, the life-secret that flows and is poured from the hidden Root into the happy branches, their blossoms and their clusters. In the imagery of the Bridal it is to a life "in the newness of the Spirit" that the Spouse of Christ is called.[2] In the imagery of the Building it is "in the Spirit" that the saints, compacted into their Corner Stone, are "being builded together to be the habitation of God."[3] And when this figure is individualized, and the Lord Christ is seen as dwelling not now in the Church but "in the heart by faith," this is effected by the "strengthening of the inner man" by the Spirit of the Father.[4] In the imagery of the Body, above all, it is the Spirit who is the secret of the Union, the mystery and reason of the members' life in their Head; "there is one Body and one Spirit;" "by one Spirit are we all baptized into one Body."[5] "Where that

[1] John xiv. 18, 21–23, xvi. 7.
[2] Rom. vii. 1–6.
[3] Eph. ii. 22.
[4] Eph. iii. 16, 17.
[5] 1 Cor. xii. 13; Eph. iv. 4.

Spirit is," if I may quote words of the Dean of Llandaff, spoken from this pulpit, "where that Spirit is, there is the Body, and only there." And so it is when the exercises and actions of the spiritual life, which life is Christ, are spoken of at large. It is "in the Spirit" that the saint, that is to say the genuine Christian here below, "has access" in Christ unto the Father.[1] It is those who are "led by the Spirit" who "are" in truth and deed, not in a certain sense, but in reality and nature, "the sons of God" in His Son. It is "by the Spirit" that they "mortify," that they continuously do to death, "the deeds of the body," in the power and name of Christ.[2] It is "by the Spirit" that they "walk" in Christ. It is "because of the Spirit dwelling in them" (a truth full of significance as to the nature of the body of the resurrection) that "their mortal body shall be quickened," in the day when their Lord from heaven shall change it into likeness to His own.[3] Of that harvest the indwelling Spirit is the Firstfruits. Of that inheritance He is the Earnest.[4]

So the Sevenfold One is sent forth into all the earth, as the Eyes, as the Presence, of the exalted Lamb of the Sacrifice. It is by Him, and by Him alone, that that presence is in the Church, and is in the Christian.

"Sent forth into *all the earth:*" from the presence of the Blessed, from the Heaven of Heavens, into all the earth; from the heart of God to the heart of man; from amidst the song of the heavenly Elders to you and to me, to the circumstances of our life to-day, to the stones and dust, the thorns and mire of our path, to the snares and

[1] Eph. ii. 18. [2] Rom. viii. 13, 14.
[3] Rom. viii. 11. [4] Rom. viii 23; 1 Cor. i. 22, etc.

the illusions, to the crowds and to the solitude of earth. Yes, He is sent forth into the present, the visible, the temporal. He is intended, He intends Himself, to be no dreamy abstraction above our heads and hearts, but to be the inmost Friend, the living Strength, the infinitely ready and versatile Resource and Expedient, of the hour of your temptation, and of mine. Over the real "deeds of our body," He is able to give victory. Our tremendously real "infirmities," He is here and now able to subvent, to "help," to transfigure into strength, as to us who look for Him He "makes perfect in our weakness" the strength of the Lamb who has overcome.[1] He is able so to uphold and manage our feeble, our erring steps, that we shall "walk by the Spirit," and, in a blessed reality of deliverance, "not fulfil the lusts of the flesh," yea, in all the range of the meaning of that phrase.[2] He is able, and indeed He is willing, here and now, to "take and show to us the things"[3] of that Christ of whom He is the Eyes and Presence on the earth. He is able, He is willing, here and now, to speak in our hearts, and through our hearts, that voice, that *Abba*, which is the utterance only of the many brethren of the Firstborn, the children of God through faith in Christ Jesus.[4] He is able to "exalt us in heart and mind where our Saviour Christ is gone before," while yet animating and controlling our will hour by hour in the path of the present will of God. He is able to "shed abroad the love of God in our hearts,"[5] so that it shall radiate and diffuse itself in gentle brightness all through the things of our common day, upon the circumstances, the interests, the companionships of our immediate circle. He, the Spirit, is able—welcomed

[1] Rom. viii. 26; 2 Cor. xii. 9. [2] Gal. v. 16.
[3] John xvi. 15. [4] Rom. viii. 15. [5] Rom. v. 5.

into our inner man—to bring forth there and thence the fair fulness of His own fruit, "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control."[1] He is able to set us at liberty in Christ, and yet by the same act to bind us into the bondage of Him "whom to serve is to reign." He is able to make all the flying hours of inestimable and never-returning time sacred to us, and yet to take out of them all anxiety; to fill the heart with the things eternal, and yet to open to it as no other touch can do all that is truly rich and beautiful in the things of this life. He is able, in a word, having united us to Christ, to make that Union "a living, bright reality," a possession that we use as well as have, in the whole of life. "All these things worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will."[2] And, meanwhile, He worketh thus as the Eyes, as the Presence, of the Lamb. All is drawn from, all is related to Christ, still to Christ, Christ glorified, Christ crucified.

Ah, be that in its turn recorded and remembered. Of WHOM is this Holy One the Presence? Whose life, and love, and peace, and power, does He convey and mediate to the heart and life He has Himself regenerated, breathing "where He listeth," but so breathing that "thou hearest the sound"[3] of the heavenly Wind in the being which He vivifies? It is not a merely abstract Christ, if I may use the phrase. It is not merely archetypal Goodness, Righteousness, Truth, and Beauty. It is the Lamb that was slain. It is the Propitiation. It is the sinner's Prince of Peace. It is the Rock of Ages, *cleft*, for me, and for thee. It is our

[1] Gal. v. 22, 23 [2] 1 Cor. xii. 11. [3] John iii. 8.

Passover. It is our Ransom. It is He "in whose blood we have redemption, even the remission of our sins."[1] It is He who "was made sin for us, though He knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."[2]

With all my heart I press upon your remembrance that phenomenon of our text. All along I have been compelled, of course, to leave out great aspects of great truths. I have said nothing of the function of the blessed Sacraments of grace, in respect of our union with our Lord. Not, God knoweth, that I think lightly (it is rather with ever-deepening reverence) of their place and work, their work above all—straight from the will and hands of God—as holy Seals, divine and royal, upon the covenant promises and gifts which mere faith receives. But I am sure, (and great Anglicans of the past at least would bear me out,) that these sacred things are not meant for one moment, by any theory about them, to bar the way in the soul against the very simplest and directest questionings and convictions concerning spiritual life or death, genuineness or counterfeit, the nominal or the real. They are to leave utterly unconfused the very simplest faith and hope, rested at once and without a medium upon the finished work of the Son and the present workings of the Spirit. However, as I say, I can but touch this question, with reverence, and pass on. But I cannot quite so briefly pass by this other matter, this sight of the exalted Lord in the great vision as the Lamb that was slain. What does it say in relation to our main theme, the gift and power of the Spirit, and our union in Him with Christ? It says that the Lord's Sacrifice needed to precede our life. It says

[1] Eph. i. 7. [2] 2 Cor. v. 21.

that we must seek spiritual blessing, not merely as creatures tending towards the Creator, as the finite reaching by the law of its nature towards the Infinite, as moral beings whose essential desideratum is truth and beauty. No, it is as fallen men, as sinners; not diseased only, and disordered, and enfeebled, but guilty transgressors of the dread and blessed law; suppliants for mercy, recipients of it on our knees, through the righteousness of Another, through "the obedience of One."[1] Thus it is that we, that you and I, must receive the promise of the Father, the power of the Spirit, the presence of the Lamb.

"The righteousness wherein we must be found, if we will be justified," says Richard Hooker, in his great *Discourse of Justification*, "is not our own; therefore we cannot be justified by any inherent quality. Christ hath merited righteousness for as many as are found in Him. In Him God findeth us, if we be faithful; for by faith we are incorporated into Christ. . . . Let it be counted folly, or frenzy, or fury" (perhaps, had he lived in our time, he would have added, "or fiction, or mythology"),—"whatsoever, it is our comfort, and our wisdom. We care for no knowledge in the world but this, that man hath sinned and God hath suffered; that God hath made Himself the sin of man, and that men are made the righteousness of God."

But to return, and to close. For us this afternoon the main thought, and the last thought, must be not the awful, the blessed, Antecedent and Condition, but the reality and fulness of the resultant Gift, the Spirit of the Son of God unifying us with Him. Let us remember, let us adore, the Sacrifice through which we obtain the heavenly Blessing; but

[1] Rom. v. 19.

let us both obtain and use the Blessing. Let us worship the Lamb that hath conquered; but let us "divide the spoils." Looking to the Crucified, let us walk by the Spirit, and be at peace. "I feel," writes Thomas Chalmers, in his diary—and he was no dreamer in the path of this life—"I feel that looking up for the Spirit through Jesus Christ is the only effectual attitude for obtaining love to God and filial confidence in Him."

I will say no more upon the text. Bear with me a few moments longer if I pay my poor tribute to the blessed memory of one who is but just lost to our University,[1] and to the Church militant on earth, and whose name I venture to enroll on the lengthening register of my friends in Christ gone home. Let me lay one more wreath of love and honour upon Ion Keith Falconer's Arabian grave. He was gifted, as men well knew, in many ways; with the gifts of birth, which are worse than nothing without goodness, but a true talent with it; with the physical vigour and address which Scripture itself calls the glory of young men; with a mental constitution in which facility and rapidity of acquisition and accuracy of result were combined as few men are permitted to combine them. He took his seat at nine-and-twenty in the conclave of our Professors. And then, quite unobtrusively, and as in the day's work of life, he went forth for the Name's sake of his beloved Lord, to be the evangelist of the Arabians. And then, ten days ago, before his thirty-first birthday, he lay down and slept in Christ. We know little

[1] The Hon. Ion Keith Falconer, M.A., Lord Almoner's Reader in Arabic in the University, and Missionary of the Free Church of Scotland at Aden, died May 11, 1887, a few days before this Sermon was preached.

yet of the circumstances of his death; but a little we do know. I venture to read these sentences from a letter to a Cambridge friend, with the sight of which I have been favoured, a letter written only on the 3rd of May: "Since February 10," he says, "until a day or two ago, I have been suffering from remitting fever; for twelve weary weeks, with a few short breaks, on my back, a useless invalid. . . . I trace it to two causes: To this shanty in which of necessity we are living, for the walls are merely open lattice-work; we have covered them with canvas, but that is a poor substitute for stone. Secondly, to the incessant high winds that sweep the place. We shall soon be in a good house, which is building, and the hot weather has begun, so we look forward to a spell of health now. . . . . The people flock to our hospital. . . . I long for health to get at them." And then he thanks God for excellent spirits, and some of the old bright humour breaks out as he writes.

Not many years ago died, in the very noon of youth, Ion Keith Falconer's elder brother, Dudley. It is on record that for three whole days his dissolution was, from the medical point of view, retarded by the overflowing joy which filled and animated his being as the prospect shone before him of entrance into the presence of the King. God deals not so with all His dying saints. It may or may not have been thus with this true brother of the same blood, and the same precious faith, as he also went over that Jordan. But it is sure as the foundations of all truth that he is exceeding glad now, in great "joy and felicity" now, in the everlasting life; welcomed with open embraces into the eternal tabernacles, into the bliss of the sight of Christ. And why? The ultimate answer is—because of the blood

of the Lamb, because of the indwelling and the leading of the Holy Spirit.

And what to us, what to the Christian Church, says the silence of his grave? When, forty years ago, the apostolic Krapf buried his wife at Zanzibar, and stood alone beside the tomb, "Now," said he, "is the time come for the evangelization of Africa from the eastern shore; for the Church is ever wont to advance over the graves of her members." That omen is fulfilling now. So shall it be in Christ's name for old Arabia, shut so long against the Cross, but claimed now for her true Lord by our scholar-missionary's dust.

JUSTIFICATION

JUSTIFICATION

Preached at Cambridge, before the Judge of Assize

"Whom He justified, them He also glorified."—ROM. viii. 30.

I READ these words not now to discuss their context, nor in any minute way to analyse their doctrine. That doctrine goes deep as the foundations of the throne of God, and high as the exaltations of His glory in that supreme future which the Apostle here, with an astonishing turn of thought and language, dares, because of the divine certainty of its realization, to speak of as a present, nay, as a past; "*He glorified.*"

On this occasion, on which the sanctity of Law is our reason for assembling, I ask attention to this short oracle, with a view to two ideas implied and imbedded in it. The one is, the necessity and majesty of the legal aspect of the divine pardon. The other is the splendour of the contrast, in one respect, between the justifications uttered by an earthly judge and by the heavenly Judge respectively—the contrast in regard of the overflow of grace and of glory with which the heavenly Justification is inseparably, and in its very nature, attended.

1. "Whom He *justified*." I need not here enquire and

quote at any length on the meaning of the verb "to justify." It is sufficient to say, what cannot fairly be doubted, that the word, looked at wholly apart from the dust of controversy, and in the cool air of the common use of language, does not in any degree whatever mean to amend, to reform, to purify. Its reference is to tribunals and sentences, to condemnations and acquittals, to judges and to law. To justify is to prove, or to sum up proofs in the assertion and award, that the person, or the thing, is satisfactory to the law. The tribunal, the judge, and the award, may be figurative or literal. They may mean public opinion, or private opinion; they may belong to the administration of the law of England; they may belong to the administration of the law of Heaven. But the central idea in each case comes out the same from the verb "to justify," and from its Greek equivalent fully as well; and that idea is, the establishment of a position satisfactory as before a tribunal and a judge.

No doubt, when the word looks towards religion, and bears upon the award of the judgment-seat above, it is, by the nature of the soul's relations to God, inevitably followed by ideas of moral change, ideas of reformation and rectitude. But this does not alter the essential of the idea of the word. That stands immovable, and alone; and it is still this, the establishment, the proof, or the authoritative assertion which implies and sums up the proof, that the soul is, for whatever reason,—the reason is another matter, infinitely important, but quite apart,—that the soul is in a position satisfactory to the sacred Law.

The word is steeped in the associations of law, and of the exposition and enouncement of law; things in themselves, in their true ideal, equally necessary and ma-

jestic; things so lofty in their inner nature that few matters have been found, in the history of literature, to pass more naturally, by way of metaphor and simile, into the language of the poets. At least we cannot study the consummate Latin masters without finding everywhere in their work allusions to the forum and the tribunal, and without feeling the perfect harmony of those allusions with the whole texture of the immortal verse.

Only the most hasty and imperfect thought spent upon the Gospel scheme will really quarrel with the *legal*, or, to use a word often misliked, the *forensic*, aspect of its terms. Thought which has looked deeper, and certainly thought which has looked deep enough into facts to have really stood face to face with the eternal difference which lies between right and wrong, even where their boundary looks narrowest; and to have felt how the very nature of things is wholly on the sight of inevitable retribution; and to have touched a little, in the dark, on the edges of the fact of personal demerit before a Personal Supreme; such thought will not merely accept, with profound reverence, the explicit Scripture evidence to the legal element of the Gospel. It will recognize with an indescribable willingness, even though the heart and flesh fails at the recognition, that a Gospel from the region of eternal right must, if it is genuine, be a Gospel in whose very life is law; a Gospel in which infallibly, from one side at least, the divine welcome must be expressed in terms of *Justification.*

True, there is another side. There is the embrace of everlasting arms; there is the greeting of infinite affection for the weary, the burthened, the prodigal who repents, the rebel who submits. The sacred Books are the tenderest things in literature, because they exhaust upon the

illustration of divine mercy all the ideas of the deepest, and purest, and most persevering and patient tenderness of human love. In them the Eternal Being is likened to the Friend, to the Bridegroom, to the Father, nay, in one surprising passage,[1] to the Mother of His people.

But what, after all, gives to these utterances the real essence of their tenderness? It is, most surely, the presence along with them of the other side of the matter. The pure glory above the mercy-seat is so perfectly divine because it does not float above a bed of flowers, but rests upon that Ark which contains the Law, the Law printed deep in all its lines and letters upon the stones cut from Sinai, and printed there by the same Hand which embraces and blesses the penitent.

"As is the mercy, so is the majesty." As the legality, so the love.

What else would be worthy of the Eternal? Would the mere idea of full emotions, and exquisite endearments, and fond caresses, would these things taken by themselves be in the manner of Him by whom are all things, and also for whom they are?[2] No; they become worthy ideas of Him only when we see them ruled and qualified by the presence of His everlasting law and by the majesty of His judgment-seat. A God of *mere* compassion is not the true idea, any more than the true revelation. He must also be the God who, first and before all, when He welcomes, justifies.

2. "Whom He justified, them He also *glorified*." We come to the second limb of the sentence. We have spent a little remembrance on the necessity and majesty

[1] Isa. lxvi. 13. [2] Heb. ii. 10.

of legality in the idea of the Gospel pardon. We have, as it were, paused at the gate of the City of Peace, and contemplated in the gateway the presence of a judgment-seat; and have recollected the absolute, the eternal necessity, that the human soul, as it enters there, must, for reasons which supreme justice can approve, be declared satisfactory at that judgment-seat. What those reasons are, what the sacred Reason is, the Apostle amply explains, thank God, in the long context of this his great Epistle. But that is not our question now. The idea of Justification in itself, on whatever claim, the necessity of a judicial award —"thou art right in the eye of the Law"—that is what we have held awhile in view.

But now, and in a few passing minutes only, reflect upon what follows. Look at the excess of the glorious Antitype over the Type. The Type is great and venerable; an earthly judgment-seat, faithful to the statute, and intent only on just expositions and applications; jealous to arrest wrong and to secure liberty to right. But the Antitype is greater, nobler, more wonderful by far, in this respect—that it is the tribunal of Him who, being the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, will not, and cannot, terminate His sentence of acquittal in itself, but must carry it on into such welcomes of love, and such gifts of grace, and at last such issues into glory, as are worthy of His bestowal, and worthy of the amazing *reason why* of the Justification He has uttered over the believing penitent.

"Whom He justified," as the Eternal Judge, "them He also glorified," as the Eternal Father.

Here, it is obvious, the simile of an earthly, of an English, tribunal fails. On the whole,—no doubt with important exceptions, but on the whole,—the work of

earthly courts has nothing to do with welcomes and rewards. If I am not mistaken, this is so emphatically the case that even when an error of judgment has been discovered, and a man, pronounced guilty, is proved afterwards innocent, our law condescends only to address him in terms of pardon, and does not praise his virtues, or condole with his misfortune. Two reasons suggest themselves for this reserve and reticence of earthly tribunals. In the first place, their only demand, on the whole, I say again on the whole, is the performance of the minimum of requirement. And in the second place, the judge who justifies in earthly matters is, to the man before him, the judge and no more. If he sustains any other relation to him, if he is akin to him, if he loves him, it is accidental in the matter.

But, on the other hand, the eternal Law is in its very nature positive, not negative: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour, thou shalt love thy God;" and the man who is held satisfactory by *that* Law, for whatever reason, must be not merely dismissed unhurt, but welcomed as worthy. And the Eternal Judge is also, not by accident but essentially, the Father and the Friend of the justified.

"Them He also glorified."

Yes, such is the sequel of the sentence of acquittal at the seat set in the gate of the City of God. The soul is not ushered out again, to wander back into its wilderness, to meet the old temptations with the old weakness; to take its chance, its hopeless chance, against being brought another day into court and condemned for ever. It is not only not guilty. It is "accounted righteous." The countenance of eternal Law smiles and shines upon it. The welcomes of eternal Love come out to hail it into the family

of grace, into the home of the peace of God. The Judge, on a sudden, is by its side. His hand is upon its head in blessing. His voice in its ears is most sweet; for it mingles in its eternal kindness the tones of Friend, of Brother, of Parent, of the Bridegroom rejoicing over the Bride. He claims it for His own. Henceforth it is of His inner family. "He guides it with His counsel, and He receives it at length to glory,"[1] after just such discipline as shall make the heaven which is on the one hand an absolute gift, on the other hand a divinely true result of the training of His school.

My brethren, the day is approaching, perhaps it is at the doors, when these principles of divine Law and Love will be unveiled in final action. Across the troubled waves of human unbelief, and amidst ever louder assertions that it shall never be, "that day" steps onward. Then, in the familiar words of the Apostle, we must all appear before the judgment-seat, the tribunal, the *bema*, of Christ.[2] Yes, the justified will be there; for their justifications, though conveyed as it were privately long ago, must be read out publicly also then. And there they will be indeed the glorified; for they will be like Him who is their Judge.

What shall our attitude be in view of that hour?

"Thou most worthy Judge eternal, deliver us not into the bitter pains of eternal death."

> "Almighty Judge, how shall poor wretches brook
> Thy dreadful look,
> Able an heart of iron to appal,
> When Thou shalt call
> For every man's peculiar book?

[1] Ps. lxxiii. 24. [2] 2 Cor. v. 10.

"What others mean to do, I know not well;
Yet I hear tell
That some will turn Thee to some leaves therein
So void of sin
That they in merit shall excel.

"But I resolve, when Thou shalt call for mine,
That to decline,
And thrust a Testament into Thy hand.
Let that be scann'd;
There Thou shalt find my faults are Thine."

GOD IS LOVE

GOD IS LOVE

A Trinity Sunday and Hospital Sermon

Preached in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Cambridge

"God is Love."—1 John iv. 8 and 16.

Two occasions call for special thought and exhortation this morning. We are all invited to give money to aid the Hospital. And this Sunday is the Sunday of the Trinity.

I shall not spend words in recommending the claims of the Hospital to you. Addenbrooke's Hospital has done excellent work for very many years in this town and county. And we usually find that scarcely any appeal ever made to any congregation is met with more readiness and liberality than an appeal for a hospital. The blessings of a hospital are so obvious; so many know those blessings by experience, either as patients, or as friends, neighbours, or visitors of patients, that an appeal for the hospital comes home to probably a large majority of us as a kind of personal claim.

And now this Hospital Day is also the Sunday of the Trinity.

What shall we do? Shall we this morning drop the

Institution out of mention and speak wholly of the mighty Doctrine, as if the two topics were incompatible? Nay, rather, in our present meditation upon God's Word let us combine the two. Let me take this occasion to point out an all-important fact in true religion, the religion of the Bible, that doctrine stands in vital union with life; that the abstrusest and sublimest truths affect the simplest and most present human needs, if we will but look on them aright. The Christian scheme of truth is like the ladder Jacob saw: its summit is in heaven, but its foot is upon the very dust and rocks of the wilderness of this present life.

God is Love.

What a word is this! What a simple word—three monosyllables! Often it forms a child's first text, repeated by the little half-articulating lips, printed by the little fingers in their first attempt at writing. And what an unfathomable word! Who shall exhaust its meaning, its applications? Who shall say all that is to be said of HIM of whom it speaks, and of that Love which it not only attaches to Him as one of His attributes, but as it were identifies with Him? For God not only hath love; God is Love!

And, again, what a powerful word! It has had a mighty practical influence since the old Apostle first wrote it down twice at the Spirit's bidding in this Epistle. It has opened a door in heaven through which countless souls have looked with joy and peace, knowing and believing the love of God, who is Love. And the conviction of its blessed truth has animated countless lives to labours of love for man, through the knowledge of God, who is Love. For to love Him is to learn to love His will; and His will is plain and clear, both

in the Bible and in conscience; "he who loveth God must love his brother also." [1]

This holy fact of God's Nature lies at the root of the vast works of mercy that have spread over the world since Christ Jesus came. I say not that no works of philanthropy were known before the true light shone. Man, even unregenerate man, has a conscience in his fallen estate; and it speaks of pity. But few know how rare *by comparison* genuine impartial works of mercy are and were where the religion of the Bible is unknown. And one thing is certain, that the religion of the Bible is the one religion that has not only answered the cry of man's *soul* for peace, and hope, and holiness, and an eternal heaven, but has fully honoured man's *body*. Yes, the one supremely spiritual religion is also the only one that has promised immortality to the body; that tells us how, for the believer, body as well as soul shall be preserved to heavenly life. Great is the power which lies in such a truth, both to warn man from the horrible snares of bodily sin, and to prompt him to earnest efforts for the relief of bodily suffering, if only for the sake of Him who took our nature, who hath a Body like our own.

God is Love. God, the revealed God, is Love. This His revelation of Himself has simply created a mighty mass of agencies for good,—works of love and pity, both for souls and bodies, all over this world of grief, pain, and death.

God is Love.

Perhaps it may seem that this is indeed a Hospital Sunday text; a word manifestly fit to stimulate those who

[1] 1 John iv. 21.

know anything of God's love to aid this practical work of love. But is it also a Trinity Sunday text? There is nothing dogmatic here, as the word goes; no mention of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost occurs in this brief phrase.

There is no explicit mention, indeed, of the blessed Three in One. Yet in these three words some of the most precious of the truths of the Trinity are summed up. I dare to say that we can never penetrate really deep into this text without some true knowledge of the glory and blessedness of the Holy Trinity.

For remember again what the text says. It is not that God acts lovingly only; not that results of love flow from Him only; not only that He shows love, but that He *is* Love. The text takes us up, as it were, above the veil; we are caught up through the door of this vision to the sanctuary of God's throne. We are suffered to know something, not of His working only, but of His Being. We are led to the Fountain of all true good and joy. And that Fountain is this, says St John—God is Love. Were we admitted to the very centre of the secret place of the Most High, we should find that it was the ineffably holy and happy scene of infinite and real Love.

Not only as to us, but in Himself, God is Love. He is Love to us, because essentially and eternally He is Love in Himself. When He blesses the sinner's soul with a love shed abroad in it by the Holy Spirit, this is but the outflow of His own inner glory of love; "He cannot deny *Himself*."[1]

Now, my brethren, if we would not lose ourselves in vague and meaningless strains of wordy praise of God's essential Love; if we would both dive as deep as we can into its truth, and keep also as safe, as sober, as we are

[1] 2 Tim. ii. 13.

bound to do in dealing with such a truth, what shall we do? where shall we go? To me it seems plain that the golden key to the treasures of this truth lies just here—in the revelation of the Holy Trinity, and specially now in that part of that precious doctrine which concerns our Lord Jesus Christ.

How shall we simply state the Doctrine of to-day? In a certain sense we *can* state it simply. For almost all the words we commonly use about it are very simple words—One, Three, Father, Son, Holy Spirit, God. How brief, how familiar, are all these words! They speak of truths whose *whole* we can never find out unto perfection; but they tell us that we can, and may, and must, know really, though partially, some true thing about those truths.

How shall we state, in measure, what those words convey? Somewhat thus, surely. The Bible tells me that God, the Eternal and Almighty, is One. He, and He alone, *is* from everlasting; self-existent; He was, and is, and is to come. "Because of His will all things are, and were created."[1] God is One; He will not share His throne with rivals; He will not give His glory to another.[2]

But the Bible also, and that in many ways, tells me that in Him, in His being, there is *more than* "One-ness." It bids me, in the mirror of His own revelation of Himself, gaze on the glory of the Lord; and there find light within light, mystery embracing mystery. I look on the Eternal, and I behold in Him the Eternal Father; I see Him as the Father of the Eternal Son; I see Him as the Giver of the Eternal Spirit. I look again, and the mirror shows me the Blessed Son, the Word, the Christ, the Only Begotten equal to the Father; equal in Nature, Possessor of Eternity,

[1] Rev. iv. 11. [2] Isa. xlii. 8.

of Omnipotence, of Absolute Holiness, of Infinite Wisdom; the true and eternal Son, God the Son of God. And I see concerning the Blessed Spirit, too, that He in nature is equal together with the Father and the Son; Possessor also with Them, and of Them, in infinite communion, of Absolute Holiness, Wisdom, and Might. Such is the Scripture account of God. When we look on Him as His Word reveals Him we see One, one Nature; nay, more, one Fount and Source of Eternal Being; but that Source we see evermore imparting Itself to those glorious other Two; so that it is not One but Three who will, who love, who act, in all the plenitude of divine Will, and Love, and Action; Three Persons, one God.

Now here is indeed the very highest and deepest kind of mystery. The mode of Being of the Eternal God must indeed be mysterious. "Who shall find out the Almighty to perfection"?[1] But nevertheless it is not *mere* mystery. It is mystery through which shines much that we *can* understand, and which we could not understand without the mystery. To take one point only now; there shines out through it, what we could not have possibly known apart from it, this unutterable tenderness of Love within the abyss of glory. Behold the Father and the Son. Look into the light of the Eternal Nature. It is not barren light, it is not lonely glory. The Book which reveals it uses man's words, for we could take in no others; but through those words what sacred depths of felicity and love does it imply when it speaks thus; "The Word was in the beginning with God;" "The only begotten Son is in the bosom of the Father;" "The Father loveth the Son;" "Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world;" "I had glory beside Thee

[1] Job xi. 7.

before the world was;" "My beloved Son;" "His dear Son."[1]

My brethren, when we accept the Scripture account of God (and what safer source of such information shall we ever get than that Book?)—when we accept the account which His Word gives us of Himself, just as simply as we should accept a seraph's account of *his* mode of being, if the bright spirit could tell it to us in human speech,—do we not then see somewhat deeper into the meaning of the text? Is there not indeed something to grasp, to embrace, in these words, God is Love, when within the glory of Godhead we see the revealed love of God for God, the infinite embosomed tenderness of the eternal Son with the eternal Father? Yes, there is something here that meets the human soul in its longings more livingly, more warmly, than the God of mere philosophy, the God of mere deism, the God of man's own inventing. Here is more than a Cause, a Law, a Governor, a benevolent Monarch, a Father by creation. Behold, what manner of love!—the eternal Father, and the eternal Son, with the blessed Spirit of Truth and Love. This is the God of Revelation. This God is Love.

In revealing the truth of the Trinity the God of the Bible does much more than shew to us an abstract doctrine. He unveils to us Himself.

God is Love.

Such is the Fountain; worthy of its Stream. This Love of the Being of God came forth, unasked, unmerited, in the love of His actings. He, this God, loved the world; so loved it that He gave His only begotten Son for the

[1] John i. 1, 18, v. 20, xvii. 5, 24; Matt. iii. 17; Col. i. 13.

sinner's life. "He spared not His own Son;" "He commendeth His love to us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us;" "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another;" "We have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is Love."[1]

Yes, my brethren. Here is indeed the point of contact between the sublime truth of the Holy Trinity and the humblest, smallest, most trying claims which one poor suffering human being may lay upon another, if this other is a Christian, a child and servant of this God. Here descends the great ladder of light, from the throne above all heavens, to the stones of the desert road. If God is *this* God, if this God hath thus loved us, then we cannot own His tenderness to us, we cannot see this glorious depth of lovableness in Himself, and yet remain cool, calculating and selfish in our thoughts and wills towards our suffering brethren. We cannot count heart's sorrow, and soul's sin, and body's pain "nothing to us who pass by," if in the least degree we have known and believed the love which Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have poured out on us from the fountain of their own eternally loving Deity.

The truth of the Trinity comes down to the bed of pain, to the burning head, the wasted cheek, the broken limb, and bespeaks for the sufferer the kindness of those who in the glory of the Father and the Son have seen that God is Love.

[1] Rom. v. 8, viii. 32; 1 John iv. 10, 11, 16.

HEAVENLY REASONS FOR LIBERAL GIVING

HEAVENLY REASONS FOR LIBERAL GIVING

Preached in Trinity Church, Cambridge

"Now concerning the collection."—1 Cor. xvi. 1.

I have to ask to-night for gifts for a good work. I am to beseech you to give alms for the Church Pastoral Aid Society; that is to say, to put what you can into the hands of an agency which is the invaluable helper in the Lord of some seven hundred overtasked and work-worn pastors of the English Church, men who, between them, have to deal, in the things eternal, with about five millions of English people; a population utterly out of effectual individual reach for those seven hundred pastors, except so far as some large "help against the mighty" comes to them from agencies like this.

Think only of that one aspect of the matter before you finally resolve what to give this night. Put before yourselves in thought some one of those seven hundred. Watch him as he goes out to his streets and lanes; think of him as he looks at the vastness of the work, and the thinness and meagreness of the means. Imagine him—and it needs no effort to do so—imagine him worn even

to the chronic verge of illness with what he does, and tortured with that far heavier burthen than physical exhaustion to a living conscience and loving heart, the burthen of the sense of what is left undone. Think of him, spending the last shilling he can honestly spare from his household on some scheme of good; think of him, pining for the means to build a mission-room here, or to plant a school-house there. Realize his intense longing for more help; for a curate, or another curate, sound in faith, acquainted with Christ, strong in physical habit, wise, kind, and loyal, to whom he may trust a part of his huge burthen which is also his intense and precious interest. Put him before you as he writes for aid to this Society, and waits for the reply; and then at length he opens the letter, and finds that nothing can be done. "We are sorry; but your case is beyond our reach. Your parish is populous, but others outnumber it. You have waited long; others have waited longer. Your need grows, but, alas, the funds of the Society do not grow at all as they should. We cannot help you. God send you some other aid."

Such answers to such appeals are not in the least imaginary. Put the fact of them before you, before you calculate your gift to-night.

The Church Pastoral Aid Society arose in 1836. The state of our large towns was beginning then in a new way to be studied by Christian men, and the practical heathenism bred in their depths was coming up into the light of public knowledge. Great cities, in any large numbers, are a modern fact in England. London, to be sure, the most astonishing of cities, was vast even a century ago; not far from the present dimensions of Liverpool, for

example. But London stood clearly alone then. Within the memory of very old people whom I have known, it was noted as a great wonder at Bristol that there were many points in it where a man could stand, and see nothing but a landscape of houses, without any outlook into the woods and fields; and Bristol was then the second city in the realm. In days like those, we may fairly say, the mere machinery of the Church of England was not hopelessly behind its work. The great and useful system of parishes, old almost as our Church history, brings practically every acre of British ground within the district of some pastor's care; and this system, so far as the pastors did their duty, was fairly adequate then, as it is, on the whole, outside the large towns, now. But within some eighty or ninety years of the present day a whole world of change was on foot. Growth of population, and alterations in conditions of production and manufacture, set running a fuller stream of emigrants from the country to the city; and so the building up, and heaping up, and ever denser and denser crowding of the towns, began. This meant of course a tremendous overgrowth there of parish populations; and this meant less church-room, less church-going, less possibility of individual religious influence, less tendency of public opinion towards religious decency, till such a state was at last established as that prevalent now in the east of London, where the bent and weight of social opinion, of all the local *comme il faut*, goes with the dead force of what may be called a hostile indifference against the very idea of public worship, whether in chapel or in church.

We may be very sorry for the reasons of all this. But some of them were irresistible reasons; causes which *must* have shifted the population, and impaired the parochial

system, and which ought to have been met at the time, no doubt, not by vain struggles to stop the change, but by believing efforts of love and labour to provide for the want it made. But, alas, Christians were slow then to wake up to the full meaning of the facts; and when they did wake up, it was often, to human seeming, all too late: the plague of heathen ignorance and rooted irreligion was begun.

And now it is for us not to sit down and despond, but to do what we can. What means there are now, it is ours to use. And eminent among them is this admirable Society. Use it. Welcome as an opportunity its existence and its appeal. Do not turn away, saying, "Another collection! Incessant and multiplied claims! I cannot give to this." You cannot? Why not? Is it because you can look in your Lord's face and say, "Thou knowest, O Lord, that I love Thee and Thy work; but Thou knowest that I am pinched and poor, and others, whom Thou hast given me, claim all my little means"? Ah, if you can say that, pass the plate with a clear conscience; only carry out of church (as you are sure to do) a loving heart which prays for blessing on the gifts that can be given. But if you cannot say that; if you know, as too many converted Christians know of themselves, that you hardly, if ever, give up to the point of real self-denial, at least of what you can possibly call self-denial, when you realize that your Lord is looking at you as you say it; if you cannot look Him in the face and say, "Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee, but Thou knowest what I *cannot* do, though I long to do it;" if you know that He knows that your giving leaves very much behind in the treasury of easy comfort and overflowing competence; then, my

brother, do not dare, with this great, pressing, imploring claim before you, to cut down your gift. Stretch it, expand it, venture for Jesus Christ's sake to be—may I dare to say so?—extravagant in His cause. "Inasmuch as ye do it for the least" of His toiling, discouraged, work-bewildered brethren, amidst the ever-thickening masses of the mighty towns, "ye do it unto Him."[1]

You know that He deserves it. He gave you all you have, and all you ever will have through the deep future of everlasting riches. Nay, need I say unto thee that "thou owest Him thine own self besides," plucked from an eternal death into the beginnings already of eternal life? Then let thy Lord have joy of thee. Let Him see thee at last ever more and more delighting in the blessedness of service; spending, really spending, and really being spent, for Him.

You know that He deserves it; and you know that He has promised to treat you as if He did not deserve it; as if what you do for Him were so much unmerited kindness. You know what He said about the cup of water. You know what He will do to the servant who works with the talents, or with the pounds, for Him. Trust Him. Is His promise worth nothing in the market? Can you not venture on His bond? Will He *not* "pay you again"?[2]

There was a preacher of the old days, witty as well as wise. He was to preach for a charity; and he took for his text that word, "He that giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord: and look, what he layeth out, it shall be paid him again."[3] The application was terse and pithy. He read the text slowly over. "You hear it?" he said. "The

[1] Matt. xxv. 40.

[2] Matt. xxv. 21, 23; Mark xix. 41; Luke x. 35, xix. 17.

[3] Prov. xix. 17.

interest is good. The security is ample. The investment is excellent. Down with the money."

But it is time that I should come to my own text. I have not forgotten it. My pleadings for the "Pastoral Aid Society" have all been intended to lead up to it. But now up to it let us go, for it is worth the going. "Now concerning the collection."

I took these words not only for their own sake, but for the sake of the place where they stand. They get an amazing force from their position. Placed there, this practical detail, this transitory local arrangement of which St Paul goes on to speak, this bit of business-like method, this first account we ever have of a punctual Sunday collection for a charitable object,—I say it gets an amazing force; it springs and rises into an eternal assertion of Christian principle, good for every place and every time, till time shall be transfigured into eternity. This little word about that often unwelcome thing, a collection, a begging for money, a pleading for the chink of coin,—it comes to us as a message from heaven; it is full of the powers and glories of the world to come.

You see what I mean. This verse is the immediate sequel of the fifteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians. You know what that chapter is. In it the Holy Ghost, by St Paul, struck such a light out of darkness, such a truth out of error, as only He, the Life-giver, could have struck. This is the chapter which seizes and grasps the denial of the Resurrection of the Body, and first holds it up to the sun light of the fact of the Resurrection of Jesus, and then solemnly rends it asunder and scatters it to the winds, and utterly forgets it, as it were, in the explanation and revela-

tion of what the coming glory of the body is; the body in which the Spirit of Christ has dwelt; the body which is sown in corruption, in weakness, in dishonour, in animality, to be raised in incorruption, power, spirituality, hereafter. This is the chapter with which the believer goes down to the grave, and yet triumphs over it as if he were already actually sitting with his Redeemer in the heavens. This is the chapter with which the mourner looks face to face on Death, and reads him his own warrant of arrest in what looks like his hour of final and irreversible triumph. Just then, when the grave lies open in the old churchyard, when the coffin is quite ready for the grave, when the last look at the sacred preciousness of face and form has long been taken, and there is nothing but a close-fastened chest ready to be carried out and put six feet below the turf, just then comes the Church with the Bible, and with this chapter, and reads the death-sentence to Death upon his throne: "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. O death, where is thy sting? . . . Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ;" "This mortal must put on immortality."

This is the chapter which springs into the heaven of heavens from the very groans and blood of Calvary. "First of all, He died;" there is its beginning. "O death, where is thy sting?" there is its end, its logical, consecutive, linked and welded end. This is the chapter which brings us to the last day, the last hour, the last moment, of this present order of things; which bids us hear the last trumpet sounded, and see the rising dead and the transfigured living thronged together in one host past number around Him who was their Firstfruits long ago. This is the chapter whose foreview of eternity is so wholly occupied with the

bliss of the elect Church that it contains no allusion, not the faintest, to the awfulness of judgment, but, as it were, sees nothing, and is conscious of nothing, but the power, and brightness, and infinitely refined spirituality of the life of heaven. From end to end the chapter is full of the deep things of God: the Work of the Son, the vicarious Agony, the resurrection Conquest, the kingdom of the Father, the amplitude of eternal promises, the deep testimony of nature itself to worlds beyond its own.

Oh, what a mount of transfiguration! Here not Moses only and Elijah, but the nations of the resurrection, appear with the Lord in glory, and speak of His decease, and enter into the bright cloud of the Shechinah of the celestial presence. Is it not good for us to be here? Shall we not build tabernacles, as it were, of musing and of imagination here, and forget upon those heights the petty cares and details of these present things?

"*Now concerning the collection for the saints!*" That is Paul's answer to such cravings. He has led us up, that he may bring us down. He has cleared the air for ever in the direction of heaven. But he has so done it that now the sun of heaven is to shine with all the keener light upon the minutest duties that make the roadway beneath the pilgrim's feet. "Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory. Therefore abound in the work of the Lord." And now—to come to the very point next before us—"now concerning the collection for the saints."

Ah, here is one of the strong prevailing principles of the Gospel. I take this little clause, this dry-sounding clause, and hold it up, and look at it. It is a link in a chain, I find, and it pulls the chain with it. And I find that the chain is all gold, from that land which eye hath not seen,

and the gold of that unseen land is good, and real, and precious beyond price. And I see here that by indissoluble links that world is bound to this; glory has in its essence to do with grace, and grace has in its inmost essence to do with duty, with the humblest and most prosaic duties of the hour that is upon us now.

I see here that the everlasting hope is no fine abstraction for the shades of Academus, or of Tusculum, for the cells of hermits, or the pillar-tops of self-torturing devotees. I see it so gloriously embodied, so divinely brought down, in the person of the Lamb of God who is our hope, that it touches everything in life we think most earthly, and far from melting it away into a *maya* of the Hindoo, into a dreamland not worthy a Christian's attention, gives a reality which nothing else can give to "the changing scenes of life;" forms as it were an immortal essence under the accidents of time; makes it important, in a most sacred sense of importance, what the believer does with his weeks and his days, his knowledge, his influence, his money. I see immortality so brought home as to bind heart to heart with more, if possible, than the vivid tenderness of an earthly home. I see it making Corinthian care for Jew, and Pharisee for Greek, as brother cares for brother. I see it warming their souls into the instinctive skill and practical energy of sympathetic love; not compassionating only, but planning how to carry compassion out; methodizing their means, saving their store, collecting every Sunday for the poor, needy, struggling, wistful saints.

All this is perfectly natural, native, to the Gospel. When the Gospel touched the earth, this flower sprung up at once beneath its foot. And that flower has bloomed ever since, and one of its sweet propagated blooms is this

blessed work which we are asked to help to-night—this veteran agency of aid for the toiling, loving saints who are trying to seek and save the lost multitudes of English cities in our modern world.

In the name of immortality, in the name of the Lord of it, in His dear name who "first of all died for the sins" of us, miserable sinners, lying in darkness and the shadow of death; in the name of His mighty and most certain "promise which He hath promised, even eternal life;"[1] in the name of your expectation of dying in peace because of Him, and rising in glory because of Him, and meeting your beloved ones in His presence because of Him; in the name of these things I beseech you to do an act of self-denying love in this present practical matter now, just as I beseech you, every day, and every hour, and in every part and act of life, to dedicate yourself and your belongings to Him in a steady, watchful,—may I say business-like?—obedient service.

To-morrow is the Day of All Saints. Glorious festival, whose very name says, "Lift up your hearts," and points us to the thought of that vast throng above us, who at this moment, in joy unimaginable, inherit the promises, are with Christ, walk by sight, hear unspeakable words, and grieve and sin no more.

But *they* are not *all* the saints: they are but the company of the Upper Chamber. Here below also is the Family of God. Here, where His toil-worn servants struggle on for Him in the daily battle; here, where trembling souls find deep, perfect refuge in Him from their besetting sin, from their treacherous self; here, where the ignorant and

[1] 1 John ii. 25.

they that are out of the way crave for the Gospel, and welcome it in their dark lives with joy;—here are the saints. And for these saints, on this All Saints' Eve, as it were in full view of those who have past into their rest,—for these saints, in the sweet willingness of an immortal hope, let us take thought "concerning the collection" now.

SELF-DISCIPLINE

SELF-DISCIPLINE

Preached in the University Church, Cambridge

"Take heed unto thyself."—1 Tim. iv. 16.

This warning was addressed, in the first instance, under special circumstances, to an eminent Christian. Paul had left Timotheus, his beloved and trusted Timotheus, to do a grave and authoritative work in the Church at Ephesus. He was to revise and correct the preaching heard in the assemblies of the faithful. He was to scrutinize the characters of candidates for sacred orders. He was to ordain the worthy. He was, if needful, to sit in judgment upon accused pastors. He was to regulate, as far as precept and discipline could do it, the whole tone of Christian life.

The man was not unworthy of the work. Anxious, conscientious, spiritual, early grounded in the truths of salvation, and long disciplined to duty under the great influence of Paul, he had stepped into that field of toil, we may well believe, with no lack of insight and of purpose. Nevertheless on this Timotheus, on one circumstanced and charactered like this, the Apostle thought it not unnecessary to urge home this precept, "Take heed unto thyself." Self-control, self-discipline, must be pressed upon the conscience of this Christian leader. This pastor of

pastors, this saint among saints, must "take heed unto himself."

I do not intend to speak further of this first reference of the text. My aim is not to dwell upon the life and work of Timotheus, but to engage your attention upon a wider topic, the Gospel precept and duty of self-discipline in the believer's life. But our discussion and exhortation may gain point and weight by our thus first recalling, for this moment or two at outset, that even for a Timotheus, surrounded by the sanctities of such a work, and trained already into such a character, there was need for such a word to be written down—"Take heed unto thyself."

But I come to our topic now at once.

"What is the chief and highest end of man?" This is the first question in the Scottish Catechism. And no Christian will dispute the truth and grandeur of the answer; "The chief and highest end of man is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him fully for ever." And what, we may go on to ask, is the final requisite to that end? A character in harmony with God, and capable therefore of the heaven of His presence. And what, so far as we are concerned, is the ultimate aim of the divine Gospel? To make that character.

To be sure, the Gospel has other aims, in the same line, or in parallels. But so far as we are concerned, I repeat it, the ultimate end of the Gospel, the final cause of all its facts and all its doctrines, of all its methods for discovering man to himself and for discovering God to man, may be described and fixed as I have said. The whole complex moves directly upon this goal, the production, the creation, the re-creation in man, in this being made to glorify God

and to enjoy Him for ever, of a character qualified for that end.

Let me specially remind you, because it is specially significant, how upon this issue, ultimately, is bent the great doctrine of justifying grace. What, as regards man, guilty man, is the final cause of the atoning Cross, the red altar of the all-blessed Substitute of the sinner? It is the creation, in the penitent who embraces that one hope set before him, of a character in harmony with that God, equally absolute in grace and in "severity,"[1] who spared not His Son. I do not say that this is the immediate purpose of the Cross, as set out in Scripture. No, it has first to effect not transfiguration of character, but acceptance of person. It has to effect the objective reality of a righteous pardon. It has to procure and to assure the justification, then and there, of the believing penitent. We cannot hold that too firmly in life, as assuredly we shall be thankful to grasp it in the hour of death. But that sacred pardon, or call it rather acceptance, a nobler word, is all the while a means and not an end. Its end, as far as the justified are concerned, is the transfiguration of character. It is to result in profound effects upon the will. It is to open up to the man the power of the Comforter. It is to release the will, distorted in the fall; so to release it that it may move in harmony with the will of God the Justifier. It is thus to sanctify character into a true capacity, impossible before peace with God, to glorify and to enjoy the Holy One.

The Cross, beheld by faith, trustfully accepted, is indeed the penitent's title, his one title, to eternal life. But the title is not the whole process of salvation. There must be training too. And the grant of the title is thus but a step,

[1] Rom. xi. 22.

though immeasurably important, in the whole process. It lifts away the millstone of condemnation, on purpose, above all things, that the pardoned may be made effectually willing, with a will disengaged from the fears and the repulsions of the unpardoned state, to be trained into a character in harmony with God and capable of His heavenly presence.

It is for special reasons that I have dwelt thus a little on the truth of justification, in connexion with the theme of the regeneration of the character of the justified. It is because that connexion, in certain types of Christian thought and feeling, is too often left out of sight, or only just in sight. This may be due sometimes to a recoil from the error which ignores or denies, in its view of the Cross, the precious truth of propitiation, of the satisfaction there made to eternal holiness by the Lamb of God, made in order to the placing of the penitent in a position outside which there could be for him no spiritual regeneration. But whatever be the causes of the mistake at which I now am aiming, and the cause is often, no doubt, mere narrowness of view of the Scripture account of the case, it is, as a fact, too common to deal with divine pardon out of its connexion with resulting character. True, there are times when the whole question of the awakened conscience is concentrated upon pardon. Where is the pastor who has not sometimes sate silent by the bed of death, and met the imploring gaze through which looked a soul, perhaps the soul of some once stubborn unbeliever, shrinking under the frown of a Judge of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and asking if indeed, after all, iniquity can be covered; if indeed such a God, the God not of ideas but of the Bible, can "justify the ungodly"?[1] And what true pastor, in such an

[1] Rom. iv. 5.

hour, would first discuss with the dying the whole spiritual sequel of the offered pardon? No, surely; but the main question is, of course, with the main aspects of the Gospel, with the rule of its workings, and not the exception. And in that respect it is deplorable, because it is so entirely unlike the Bible, to forget the immovable truth that the penitent is accepted not only that he may be spared the sorrows of a lost eternity, but that he may be brought decisively under training into a character at harmony with God and capable of the eternity of His heaven. "Being made free from sin," that is to say, from its claim, "and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end, everlasting life." [1]

It must be a study then of supreme importance to trace in Scripture some of the principles of that process which tends thus to educate the soul that has fled into that refuge which becomes also, instantly, its school.

One fragment of such an enquiry I suggest to your thoughts to-day. I ask to emphasize just this fact, that the New Testament, to speak now only of the New, keeps before the believer everywhere, persistently, importunately, this great aim, the production of spiritual character; and that it specially urges on him everywhere, by precept, by example, by promise, and by warning too, that in that process one main means in the great Worker's hand is the self-disciplining action of the Christian's released and regenerated will. The statement may be trite enough in terms. But the truth is one to which, surely, the new-born soul responds with an earnest welcome, however often, or however weakly, it may be stated.

[1] Rom. vi. 22.

And to state it just now is, indeed, not out of season. We inhabit a period full of subtle tendencies to self-indulgence. I mean not only material self-indulgence, the heaping of comfort upon comfort, and elegance upon elegance. I mean the moral self-indulgence which, in plain words, abhors not evil; the temper that can tolerate what ought to be intolerable to the conscience, even if it be some elaborate romance of sin, if only it comes in a garb that greatly commends it to the intellect and imagination. And I mean the spiritual self-indulgence which quite forgets that the Gospel is a discipline of character; which perhaps views the Redeemer wholly on the side of His sacred tenderness, till that view is distorted into a sentiment as false as Mariolatry; which refuses to believe that eternity can have, in fact, a side of avenging awfulness; or which owns, and perhaps even eagerly maintains, that there are terrors for the impenitent, but rejects the fact, equally well revealed, that for every human soul, for the saved as truly as for the lost, time shall leave its mark upon eternity; that we must "labour"—not indeed for merit, but under training—"to enter into that rest;" that the "Well done, good and faithful," does not mean nothing, and will not be spoken for nothing; that "whatsoever a man soweth, that also shall he reap."[1]

There is a real risk now, if ever there was, of the cancer-growth of such self-indulgence. Too often, amidst this atmosphere, the soul that has grasped personal justification (and thrice happy the soul that has done it) yet forgets to grasp what should be its direct result; no negligent repose in sacred privileges, but the real and glorious work of the will in the strength of the peace of God. The assured and gladdened disciple too often needs to

[1] Matt. xxv. 21; Gal. vi. 7; Heb. iv. 11.

be reminded that his liberty is a liberty to observe, and love, and do every detail of his Redeemer's will; that in his happy faith he is to find the nerves of an unwearied virtue; that from his whole plan of life down to its *minutiæ* of daily personal habits, public, private, and solitary, aye, down to his sleep, his table, and his dress, he must habituate himself to the moral and spiritual consciousness of being under discipline. For he is being trained, under his Lord's grace and guidance, into the *character* of the Gospel.

It is told of a famous ascetic in the Romish annals that he was once watched, narrowly and in utter secrecy, by one who doubted whether his self-discipline was the same in solitude as in public. He was thus scrutinized, I know not how, in his very cell; and there as he rested, alone, and weary, and, as he thought, at liberty from human eyes, his mere attitude of quiet dignity, as he sate in his chair within the locked door, convinced the watcher of the complete reality of his self-discipline.

I am far from praising what I understand to be the special principles of Romish asceticism. The devotee of my story may have risen that hour no higher than the level of those principles. But he *may* have risen, and I think he did rise, very far above them. And, in any case, substitute the evangelic principle for its perversion, regard self-discipline, the taking heed unto self, not as an expiation for sin, or as a working up to pardon, but as part of the process which schools the believer's character for the service and the sight of God; and you have nothing but a noble example in the man who could be spied in his loneliest hour and could be found, there and then, to be controlling his acts and habits. Reverence is not faith. Self-discipline is not holiness. You may be

profoundly devout, and not know God. You may wear your body to a shadow, and not know God. But the soul that does know God, or rather is known of Him, will seek and will practise reverence most deep and self-discipline most attentive; for they are part of the training, under the grace of God, of that character in which the justified will stand out, at last, the glorified.

By self-discipline I mean, of course, that which begins deep within. Without that, "bodily exercise" is indeed of little profit.[1] But it is inconceivable that real inner self-control, on Gospel principles, will ever terminate within. The grave calm attitude of the devotee in his cell did not indeed prove that his every thought was subdued to the obedience *of Christ*.[2] But I think that a soul so happy as to have its every thought so subdued would almost necessarily express itself, so to speak, in personal habits always and everywhere controlled by an instinct of noble seemliness.

The justified Christian who is self-indulgent, who takes not heed to himself, is an anomaly on Gospel principles. I need not explain that I do not mean that the justified are to mask themselves in an artificial sanctimony. They are not to treat human life as an idle dream, for it is their very training-ground. They are not to be morose and unsympathetic among their neighbours. They are not to suppress all that is warm and radiant in their own circumstances or endowments. No, but they are to *control* themselves in these things, in the light of the will of God. They are expected by the whole Gospel to take heed unto themselves. If, claiming to stand among the justified, they find themselves remiss in common things, lax

[1] 1 Tim. iv. 8. [2] 2 Cor. x. 4.

in personal conduct, unregardful of the claims of others, uncourteous, unthankful, undutiful, let them take heed unto themselves. Precisely because they are justified, they are under training, and strict training. And eternity will bear the imprint of what that training has been for them.

Do I forget that I stand before a congregation of whom so many are in the strength and fervour of their youth? No, indeed; I do not forget the inevitable difference in the colour of life as seen by the young man in his prime and by those of us who have travelled further on. But neither do I forget that the youngest student here has well reached the period of fully conscious moral choice; an age of large capacity for moral self-discipline; an age at which hundreds of his predecessors have nobly used that capacity, by the grace of God, and have as naturally—I mean as harmoniously with their life and its surroundings—disciplined their wills and habits to the service of the Lord who bought them, as they disciplined their minds for the class list, and their bodies for the river-race. I speak to men who are amply of age for the grave strength of Christian purpose; who are of age, of full discretion, to see the dignity of modesty, and the littleness of self-assertion, the fair beauty of purity and truth, of reverence for grey hairs, and loyalty to authority, and jealous faithfulness to home, and considerate kindness to poverty and service; of age to weigh the responsibility of influence and example; of age to be nobly reverent of all things holy; of age to grasp the root-principles of the Gospel, and of age to live by them; of age to see the shallowness of the sneer or sophism that would scout them under some cant phrase of fashionable indifference or unbelief. You are indeed, honoured brethren, of age to know whom you have believed, and knowing Him, to take

heed unto yourselves in attending to all His will. You can indeed well see how the glorious liberty of His brethren (and such you are, if justified by faith) has, of course, its *law* of liberty. You can amply and maturely apprehend that while His Gospel opens out to you all that can animate and rejoice you, while it embraces you with the personal friendship of the Eternal, and expands every power with the sure and certain hope of glory, warming the believer's soul, and not less his mind, with energizing motives direct from the central fire, it always concentrates these motives upon the line of self-discipline. It bids the disciple quicken his sense of happiness by the very experience of patient duty. It says to him every moment, Do right. It constrains him, with an all-powerful gentleness, to take heed unto himself.

I must not now recite in detail the Scripture witness to this principle. Indeed the witness of the New Testament overflows all limits of mere citation, for every Gospel and every Epistle is instinct with the truth that one main part of the will of God for the brethren of His dear Son is that they should exercise the regenerated will in self-discipline. The Lord's great Sermon is full of this tone of merciful severity. Take heed, take heed, is almost the main refrain of its thought. There we read of idle words that will reappear at judgment; of foul words whose end is hell; of eyes that had better be plucked out, and hands that had better be cut off; of a narrow way, as well as a narrow gate; of ever needful caution even in alms-deeds and in prayer; of beatitudes promised to the willing subjects of the discipline of heart-convictions, and spiritual tears and hunger, and the hatred of the world.[1] And

[1] Matt. v. 3-11, 22, 29, 30, vi. 1, 5, vii. 13, 14.

through the long range of the Epistles, with all their wealth of explicit doctrine, the same appeal comes up everywhere; the Apostles, in the name of every revealed truth, insist on it that the believers shall take heed unto themselves. "Be not deceived" (how often that phrase recurs!); "let no man deceive you with vain words; whatsoever a man soweth, that also shall he reap. Mortify your members which are upon the earth. Keep under the body and bring it into subjection. Cleanse yourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit. Purify yourselves as He is pure. Gird up the loins of your mind. Deny ungodliness and worldly lusts. They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh."[1] The chosen virtues of the Gospel, because the virtues of the justified, are essentially those of self-control. That sacred chapter, 1 Cor. xiii., the Psalm of Charity, takes a conquered self for granted in all its precepts. It refuses to praise even the martyr at the stake if he has not also learned the yet better fortitude that suffers long and is kind, and is not easily provoked, and seeketh not her own. Self-restraint is carried into the most ecstatic scenes; "the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets."[2] Every social tie, every family tie, the relations of marriage, of parentage, of domestic mastership and service, are clasped with self-control; "forbear, obey, reverence, give honour, remember that ye too have your Master in heaven."[3] How often in the holy pages recurs that grand word, "patience"! "Ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God ye may receive the

[1] 1 Cor. ix. 27; 2 Cor. vii. 1; Gal. v. 24, vi. 7; Col. iii. 5; Tit. ii. 12; 1 Pet. i. 13; 1 John iii. 3.

[2] 1 Cor. xiv. 32.

[3] Eph. v. 21, 23, 33, vi. 1, 2, 5, 9.

promise. Bring forth fruit with patience. Run the race with patience. Tribulation worketh patience. The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patience of Christ."[1] And this is not the patience that sits down, but that which rises and goes on; which *wills to* set step after step in the Leader's footprints, holding on under His tasks, accepting all His terms of discipline. So the blessed Book carries on its long chain of precept, ending, in the midst of the final visions of the coming glory, with that brief suggestion of the order, the discipline, the duty, of the world of immortal joy; "the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and His servants shall serve Him."[2]

But how can I close without one word upon example as well as precept? And for example let us turn a steady gaze upon the Lord Himself. Look at the supreme "example of His patience." The reverent and believing student of His character as Man is sure to get in that study an impression of unutterable tenderness; but he is equally sure, along with it, always to be impressed by an aspect of more than majestic gravity; the air and manner of One who had set himself, in a sense unique and mysterious, but most real, to learn, to experience, obedience; "pleasing not Himself."[3] There are times, as one reads the Gospels over, when this impression of the side of sacred severity, if I may dare to say so, in the Redeemer's character is so strong that one is constrained to dwell frequently upon some special detail on the *other* hand, some definite word or work full of His exceeding love; His dealings

[1] Luke viii. 15; Rom. v. 3; 2 Thess. iii. 5; Heb. x. 36, xii. 1.
[2] Rev. xxii. 3. [3] Rom. xv. 3; Heb. v. 8.

with the leper, with the fallen woman, and the widow, and the little child, and the disciple whom He loved. Yes, from His dawn of youth to the final submission in Gethsemane, it is the same; "even Christ," in whom was no sin, nor could be, "pleased not Himself."

Take one small fragment from that record of example, and we have done. "He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them."[1] Yes, in the first radiance of His youth, from the glories of the Temple, from amidst a circle of astonished and admiring magnates of the elder Church, "He went down with them," with the Galilæan workman and his wife; "and He came to Nazareth," and to all that Nazareth contained which was repugnant to His blessed soul; "and He was subject unto them," obedient, dutiful, submissive to the household rules, respectful to the parental will, keeping every hour the whole spirit and the whole letter of the Fifth Commandment.

Is not this the example, indeed, of His patience, the mysterious reality of His path of personal duty? He was on his way to redeem a world, to seek the lost, to offer the one last Sacrifice, to rise conquering from the dead, to sit down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. How did He set about it? By pleasing not Himself; by taking up duty, the duty just at His feet, and doing that. Though He was the Everlasting Son, yet learned He, yet experienced He, obedience.

Brethren, if we are Christ's, if we are indeed of that new race, those many brethren, among whom He is First-born,[2] His Father has great things in store for us. There are doubtless many here who shall on earth do great things,

[1] Luke ii. 51. [2] Rom. viii. 29.

or suffer them, for His sake. But anywise, if we are His, we are on our way to all the greatness and all the capacities of life eternal.

What shall we do, then, what shall we be? Shall we fret under the yoke of discipline, and resent the task of taking patient heed unto ourselves? Shall we ignore the spiritual import of a common day, as if it could bear no connexion with the things beyond the veil?

Not so. We will look upon our Master. We will adore the example of His patience; the endurance shown in His great pilgrimage; the discipline He passed through on that path which led Him, in His Manhood, to the throne. And there we will renew the will, and learn the way, to submit to His incessant call to us to take heed unto ourselves, and to find in this, through the maze of life, a clue whose other end we know is fastened to the gate of glory.

> "His track we see, and we'll pursue
> The narrow way, till Him we view."

THE ENNOBLING POWER OF THE GOSPEL

THE ENNOBLING POWER OF THE GOSPEL

Preached in the University Church, Cambridge

"The Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you."—1 PET. iv. 14.

THESE words are a specimen of many similar phrases in this same Epistle; phrases in which titles of celestial honour and descriptions full of immortality are applied to the recipients of the Epistle. Born to new life of an incorruptible seed, a holy priesthood, a royal priesthood, the people of God, the house of God, partakers in suffering with the Christ of God, in due time to be exalted by the mighty hand of God, cared for now by God, called by the God of all grace to His eternal glory,—such is their condition, such their greatness.[1] Upon them comes down the music and the light of an eternal love and a glorious hope. Their joys, their sorrows, their persecutions, their fiery trials, are things of solemn and immense importance; for they are things which concern the people of God, the sons of immortality.

And yet, on the other hand, in the Apostle's view, they are beings of the most real, the most simple, the least poetic type. Externally, these kings and priests, these

[1] 1 Pet. i. 23, ii. 9, 10, iv. 17, v. 6, 10.

bearers on their heads of the Spirit of glory and of God are invested with no dignities. Strangers and scattered; pained by ever-varying temptations; many of them (very many, we may gather from the length at which their case is dealt with) slaves in the households of the heathen; all liable to be reproached for the name of Christ; all constantly exposed to the keen criticism of the world around them, and all bound to remember this, and to act with this in mind, that they are on their trial every day;[1]—such was their actual condition of humiliation and obligation; such, for numbers of them, was their actual present poverty and meanness of estate. In them God had chosen the weak things of the world, and the things despised, and the foolish things;[2] that the Spirit of glory and of God might rest upon them.

No doubt their titles of dignity and bliss had very unequal realization in different individuals. Much of the Apostle's letter is just in the tone of entreaty which implies this. Some of them at least needed to wake to the greatness of their life and hope. And of those who were fully awake to it, many doubtless failed to carry it always out into adequate action. Many failed to be always joyful, always watchful, always pitiful and courteous, always free from shame beneath reproach, always ready with the answer of meekness and of fear when questioned about their hope.[3] But in the main, such were these believers. Poor, and despised, and reproached, and ignorant on the one hand; on the other, they were chosen, called, justified, and already beginning to be glorified; the Spirit of glory and of God did rest upon them.

[1] Ch. i. 1, 6, ii. 12, iii. 18-20, iv. 14.
[2] 1 Cor. i. 27, 28.
[3] Ch. iii. 15.

They had been transformed, transfigured. From beings merely of the world around them, from the huge commonalty of character and condition, certainly from no assemblage of genius and culture, they had been refined into the family likeness of the children of God, by faith in Jesus. They had that upon them which, as we well know, made them an awful yet blessed power on the earth —the Spirit of glory and of God.

They had been *of* the world. "In the time past of their life" they had been even as others, working the will of the Gentiles, because it was their own will; living the life of all that was conventional around them—the life of lust, revel, and idolatry.[1] Now they were of the world no longer, though quite *within* it, by strict necessity. Their life may have been as rough, or hard, or homely as ever; but it was literally now unearthly. They wielded the powers of the world to come. They stood on a more elevated footing than philosopher or poet, consul or Cæsar. Something from without had come, unsought, and had made them great. The Spirit of glory and of God did rest upon them.

Our text has reminded us, in this one instance, of the ennobling, dignifying magic of the Gospel. It was *the nature* of the message of Jesus to give to these peasants and slaves of Asia Minor the title, the aspirations, the courage, the wisdom, of citizens and heirs of heaven. It emancipated them into a divine freedom. It raised them to a supernatural nobility. It taught them such things as facts about the soul and its future, about eternity, about God, as made them feel a totally new wonder and

[1] Ch. iv. 3.

significance in themselves, their duty, and their destiny; and so it led them to act, to live, to die, with a purpose and in a manner that answered in some measure to that deep significance.

And all this it did by no inflation of self-righteousness, or of self-admiration. Wonderful power! It had ennobled them by a process of equally novel and complete *humiliation*. It had shewn them self, in its *sinful* aspect; and their new character of greatness was thus entirely cleared of self-complacency. But it had shewn them the Father and the Son; it had told them of the Cross and the Resurrection; it had made eternity and heaven positive realities to them; and so their greatness and their glory were at once genuine and humble; for all was bound up not with consciousness of self, but with consciousness of Christ.

The poor Bithynian slave found in Christ a secret of courageous meekness, of self-control, truth, purity,—in one word, of holiness,—which might have seemed an impossibility for him till this news came to his soul from above him, from without. He could meet life and death now, in forms often exquisitely trying, with a large-hearted mastery wholly beyond the studied and affected efforts of the philosopher, because springing with direct simplicity from an eternal motive. He could not but walk with dignity and strength; for he knew himself to be on the high-road of immortality, and he knew that he was sustained there by an influence not his own—"kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation."[1]

In his case, in short, as in ten thousand thousand since his day, the divine truth of a Saviour had done what it

[1] Ch. i. 5.

ever tends to do—it had found out at once the misery and the majesty of the human soul: its misery as sinful; its majesty as immortal, and as capable of God. And the one thought was inseparable from the other: "he had not obtained mercy; he now had obtained mercy."[1] Each truth threw light upon the other; the sin upon the great salvation, and the salvation upon the sin. The Spirit of glory rested upon him; but it was the Spirit not of man but of God. Once it was not his at all; nor could he ever have evolved it from himself. But it had been given him; it had come down to him; in mysterious mercy it, that is to say, He, had found him out; and now his new consciousness of sin, his wholly new view of a real and sure eternity, became not his agony, but elements of his power and joy. They showed him what a God he had found, and that he should possess that God for ever.

There is little hope, little fear, after the long experiments of eighteen hundred years, of the discovery of a better means than this Gospel to refine and to ennoble man. It strikes death at the roots of vanity and pride, yet it gives to the individual "glory and honour." It defines, it intensifies, it develops, his personality, and gives that personality the distinct promise of endless life for its field of thought and action. Yet it shows him all that vast treasure of being as the Creator's gift, and it shows him that Creator as the Father of Christ Jesus, and it claims the love and service of that long eternity as one holy humble offering to Him. And so the immortal soul, so far as it takes in the Gospel, grows to be both glorious and humble, refined and loving, watchful and joyful, solemnized

[1] Ch. ii. 10.

by intense views of accountability, gladdened by the possession and the prospect of such a God.

Nothing but the Scripture revelation of "redemption in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory"[1] has proved itself to be the bearer of all those fruits. Other things can produce strength without meekness, kindness without holiness, aspirations without repentance, refinement without love. The Gospel is formed to produce them *all*, as the direct result from its simplest elements; and this not only because it is the message from the throne, but because, being such, it remembers and provides for and addresses *the whole* of man—his misery and his greatness, his greatness and his misery.

Of all the expedients of the fallen heart to dispense with this one water of life, one of the most subtle must be held to be unchristian culture, æsthetic and intellectual; an expedient only too often and too skilfully applied in our own time, and perhaps in our own circles. Unchristian culture; not the noble and happy labour to exercise and refine every power, as a holy Master's gift, to be used for His service in the light of His love; not the effort to trace the endless maze of knowledge, and to assimilate the sweet influence of letters, with the earnestness and yet enjoyment of heart and mind that the hope of the Christian should involve; but the culture which is self-worship and self-indulgence in its brighter hours, and the opiate of an unquiet self in its hours of shadow; the culture which begins and ends in man; the culture which is silent about eternity, and which will not take account of sin.

It is indeed a double contrast to the work of the Spirit

[1] 2 Tim. ii. 10.

of glory and of God. It does not recognize, nay, it ignores in one degree or another, both sides of human nature. Its aims are infinitely below the greatness of our immortality; they are wholly beside the questions raised by our misery, by the groans and longings of the soul which knows the fact and the reality of sin. And so its results, legitimately worked out, will be assuredly, for individuals and society, a twofold and dreary disappointment. The being that tries it must, sooner or later, feel the ache and weariness of failure and impurity; for that being was born for immortality, and it was born in sin. Such facts cannot be left out of the reckoning with impunity. The Gospel deals with them both, and uses them both, in its refining and glorifying process. "*La nouvelle foi dans l'art*" would tend to exclude them both.

There is a well-known quotation in the great work on the historic Evidences of Christianity, with which I would illustrate and close these brief reflections. And let me not hesitate to refer thus pointedly and earnestly to the apologetics of Paley. For all his unquestionable defects of manner, so to speak, for all his too manifest coldness and dryness of plan and execution, and even for all his silence (characteristic of the time and school) about the spiritual essence of Christianity, his book is yet a strong and sagacious piece of reasoning from ample data. And it is no mean part of the proof of the Gospel that such a work in connexion with it was even possible. For the Gospel is a message to the conscience and the heart; a message that speaks direct to the inmost being of the simple and the wise, of the patriarch, and the young man, and the child. It is the voice from heaven itself to the tempted, and the

bereaved, and the dying. And yet it is historic. Alone among religions, it is essentially a mass of facts. And as such it is a part of its wonder, and nothing to its shame, that it can *both* be spoken as the message of life and holiness to the inmost soul, *and* displayed in the lines of its historic truth by the cool reasoner on the relics of antiquity.

The quotation to which I refer is the memorable Letter of Pliny, preserved amongst the hundred and twenty letters of his correspondence with Trajan, where in the midst of enquiries about public works, and requests in the interests of individuals, he asks as a matter of official business how to deal with recanting and suspected Christians. Paley makes excellent use of the letter as a proof of the vast efforts of the first Christian preachers, and of the extent of the sufferings of Christians apart from legal persecution.

The use to which I would put it here is wholly different. I would look for a moment on the judge and on the criminals at such trials as those alluded to in that letter, as representatives the one of the school of earthly culture, the others of the Spirit of glory and of God. The two parties are face to face. The able, the amiable, the much-refined Proprætor, is on his tribunal. He is one who shews in character and action much of that which so long distinguished his nation and his class—the union of large practical ability with full capacity for intellectual pursuits and pleasures. We see in him the careful and competent governor; and we remember too that he is the owner of those exquisite retreats, those Laurentine and Tuscan villas, those paradises of landscape and literature by the mountain and the shore, on which he loves to write in charming detail to his friends. His is that widespread mansion with its delightful rooms; his the alcoves and galleries which exclude the suns of summer or

collect in a genial focus the suns of winter; the gardens with their green mazes and marble fountains; the screen of woodland, and the breezy murmuring strand; the study with its retreat and stillness, and its shelves of beloved books, "not for reading, but for feeding," *non legendi libri, sed lectitandi.* His is the mind capable of arranging and enjoying that highest luxury of which refined simplicity is the soul. And before Pliny, as he sits in his judgment-seat, with his mental wealth, and his grace of character, and his ignorance of eternity and of God, we see the nameless Christian confessors of Bithynia, survivors probably, or children, of those very disciples to whom Peter had written in our text that the Spirit of glory and of God rested upon them. They are of both sexes, and of all ages; matrons, and old men, and boys; slaves many of them, such as those two *ancillæ* whom Pliny deemed it needful to examine by torture, though in vain. They are a miscellaneous throng, common people, uncultured and ignorant in the large majority; scarcely so great a person as a Roman citizen is amongst them. And yet, as we read that most moving of official letters, we feel that the greatness, the dignity, the refinement of affections, the exaltation of thoughts, the breadth and depth of view, all preponderate on the side not of the polite and learned peer of the Empire, but on that of the cheap crowd of unknown provincials in their obstinate superstition, judged fit only for the rack, or sword, or mine. And what lifts the one above the other; the criminal above the judge, the poor above the wealthy, the ignorant above the lettered, the Christian dragged from his conventicle underground, and his simple vows with his brethren to do right, and his humble Table with its bread and wine, above the courtly pagan with his official skill, and wide information, and

accomplished friends? It is the Spirit of glory and of God. It is that the judge knows not, with all his knowledge, that which concerns, and satisfies, and dignifies the whole of man. He knows much of nature, very much of affairs; he knows much of the fairest and purest forms of earthly pleasure; he knows with intimacy and sympathy the two glorious literatures of the classic world; but he knows not what his prisoners know in knowing JESUS. To them (who would not for *that* knowledge stand amongst them there?) to them, in knowing Him, are known all the mightiest realities; the depths and heights of their nature; their misery and their greatness; sin, salvation, heaven. And so they are the stronger, the wiser, the gentler, the nobler, the infinitely more cultured of the two parties. Happy, immensely happy they; for on them, who know the eternal truth, and are sure of it, and embrace it, is resting nothing less than the Spirit of glory and of God.

SERVITUDE AND ROYALTY

SERVITUDE AND ROYALTY

Preached in the Chapel of Trinity College, Cambridge, at the opening of the Academic Year

"His servants shall serve Him . . . and they shall reign for ever and ever."—REV. xxii. 3, 5.

THESE widely different promises refer to the same persons. The servants and the kings are identical; they are alike the beings written in the Book of Life; the redeemed from the earth; those who have entered through the gates into the city.

I take this twofold word from among the final promises of Him who cannot lie, not now to look upward through it upon the brightness of the eternal future, but to see the light of that future cast through it downward on our present life. Often indeed it is as useful as it is delightful to look through such revelations upward; to use the divine promise —not our mere aspirations, but the promise—as the means by which thought may reach toward the better world. Our vision will be but dim, at the clearest; but light from that pure eternity, even shed through clouds, can bring with it a strange reality of peace, and hope, and courage. So when the two Pilgrims in the great Allegory looked from the Delectable Mountains through the perspective-glass of the Shepherds; "their hands indeed did shake, yet they thought

they saw something like the gate, and also some of the glory of the place;" and they went forward singing on their way.

But more often it is our duty and our safety not so much to gaze up into heaven, as thoughtfully to remember that we "pass through nature to eternity." To us, we may be sure, if the path thitherward is not a reality, the brightness of the end is but a dream. If we are not stepping upward in the straight road of the Lord's truth and love, we lose far more than gain by "entertaining conjectures," however beautiful, of the region of immortality.

To keep us mindful of this, the Scripture perpetually warns us how the future life is in organic connexion with the present. Heavenly bliss is no arbitrary beginning of existence over again. It is the carrying out into endless issues of the process which grace begins on this side the grave. It is a joyful harvest reaped in the sunlight of an eternal summer; but it is reaped off the very fields which were ploughed and sown beneath the clouds and showers of time. "The light affliction" does more than precede "the weight of glory;" it has to do with it; it "works it out."[1]

Few passages of Scripture illustrate this vital truth better than the closing pages of the Revelation. Here is a mass of promises, almost everywhere instinct with heaven, yet almost everywhere applicable to earth. The ideal fulness of the glorious revelations demands heaven for its true fulfilment; but that fulfilment is one which must begin and germinate on earth. The prospects of a divine City, or Society, under the holy dominion of God and of the Lamb, where men see His face and bear His likeness, where His servants serve Him in His temple, and yet as kings reign in His courts—all these things have an

[1] 2 Cor. iv. 17.

application (not fanciful but strictly Scriptural) for the society, and the members, of the true Church of Christ on earth. All are revelations of a future which is yet in measure a present too.

It is in this view that I take this twofold text, asking and looking for the aid of that heavenly Teacher who alone can make the voice of His truth articulate to our inmost selves.

1. "*His servants shall serve Him.*" Here I wish to point only to the word, "His servants;" not to the promise, "they shall serve Him." The verb in the latter place is λατρεύσουσιν, a word fixing the sense specially to the service of adoration. But the noun in the former place is δοῦλοι, His bondmen, His servants by possession, His slaves.

Such is the title of the glorified. In heaven itself there is no emancipation from the bonds of God. The holy nations are eternally bound, in absolute obligation, to the will of God and of the Lamb. It is no part of the Creator's promise to raise, to educate, the creature to independence, to self-dependence. That could not be, without a profound and fatal contradiction. The created soul cannot be the basis of its own being; how could it be the source of its own joy and power, or the law of its own eternity? We read what is but *likely* when we read that the nearer and the clearer is the sight of the Creator granted to the creature, the better the creature recognizes the blessedness of self-surrender. The nearer the approach, the more entire the service.

Now, does not this truth of the future begin to be realized on earth? You know how full the Scriptures are of the idea of the *service* of God; a service not the less

real as service because it can also be viewed as "perfect freedom" in the light of knowledge and love; a service not meant to be a figure of religious speech, a form of courtly deference to the Majesty above; but an obligation real and binding; compelling with the united power of the Love and the Law of God. "His I am, and Him I serve;" "Ye turned to *serve* the living God;" "Ye call Me Master *and Lord;* and ye say well, for so I am."[1]

I wish I could press adequately home this strong truth of Scripture—this truth of the bond-service, the δουλεία, of the Christian with his Lord. I would not be mistaken in speaking of it thus urgently. I could not do it in forgetfulness of other truths. Could the soul that has obtained mercy ever forget the restful truth of God's holy pardon, holy with the blood of an everlasting Covenant,[2] the blood of ransom and of sprinkling, "the precious blood" of our Lord Jesus Christ? Could it ever forget the consoling truth of peace with the Holy One through the great Sacrifice? of love to the Father of mercies, because He first loved us? But then we surely cannot read those truths quite right if we fail to see them all in indissoluble connexion with the truth of a divine bond-service. They all involve and enforce an obligation positive, external, and constraining, not to live for even religious pleasures, but to do the will of God.

It is no unfit time just now to invigorate our remembrance of that truth. Even within the most living circles of the Christian Church just now *the sense of duty* surely is not at its strongest. Life, and energy, and holy hope and gladness,—in many quarters these are indeed on the

[1] John xiii. 13; Acts xxvii. 23; 1 Thess. i. 10.
[2] Heb. xiii. 20.

increase, not the wane. But the will to do a divine Master's will—not our liking but His bidding; the sober strength of Christian character; the weight and fixity of principle; the jealousy that conscience is kept void of offence in the plain duties of the common day;—this is not a thing so often to be found. Nevertheless, this thing is an essential in the seed sown here which is to issue in the life of heaven. "For it is written that *His servants* there shall serve Him still."

Let me speak with special emphasis to you, my brethren, who have just begun your life amongst us, to whom this is the first Sunday of College worship. How can I express the various emotions of heart and thought which stir, on a day like this, in those of us to whom the scene now new to you has been long familiar, through years overflowing with remembrances? We give you no slight welcome to this place. It is a place which, if rightly used, proves worthy indeed of loyal love; a common House bright with a magnificent tradition of the departed, and still instinct with opportunities and influences which they bequeathed, and which wake up to ever new effects whenever hearts come hither receptive of such power at all. May we not turn this welcome itself into an entreaty to do here what lies absolutely, under God, with yourselves—to make this place a training-place above all things for a life of loyalty to Christian duty? Oh, if we could think that each and all of our new compatriots were touched with the secret will to do the will of God! I should e dreaming, if I thought it were so with all. But I am sure that it is so with many. And I am sure that there is not one here with whom it may not be so. It is within your power, for it is within your prayer, to begin now, and carry on from now,

the life of Christian duty, the life of the servant of God, in its simplicity and its strength; the life lived in view of the Cross and of the holy Home; the life of the just whose presence and whose memory is blessed; the life which ends in the endless service in the light of Heaven.

I entreat you at least to think whether this element shall not enter from the first into your College life. Secure this, and the innumerable influences of this place must as a whole be powerful for good upon you. Leave this out, and you know not into what wildernesses of evil they may not quickly lead you; what shipwreck they may not prepare for you; what paralysis of purpose and of truth; what cruel forgetfulness of home; what mortal pleasures of sin; what heart-hardening pride of mind; what utter loss of even imagined faith. "Acquaint thyself with Him, and be at peace." Be willing not only to respect Christianity, but to know and to obey Jesus Christ, and to find in Him, in every passage of our ever-varying life, at once your satisfaction and your restraint. For such He is. He alone is both the Eternal Truth and the living Saviour; able to do, therefore, what the noblest abstraction could never do—equally to command the conscience and to attract the whole heart of man.

"His servants shall serve Him."

2. "*And they shall reign for ever and ever.*"

Such is the twin promise of the better Life. The bondmen of the Eternal, in that existence of endless duty, shall for ever *reign*.

Scripture does indeed largely promise honour to man. Never does it flatter him; this is part of its divine manner. But of hope and promise it grudges nothing to him, if only

he will seek it in the way of Christ. There is no sounding rhetoric in the Bible about man's dignity; no lying whisper of his self-perfectibility. But it is promised to him, through Jesus Christ, that he shall be without fault hereafter before the throne of God. "They who receive the gift of righteousness shall reign in life."[1] Poor must be our best conjectures of what the fulfilment will be. We cannot yet understand what is the nobility of being, the lofty purity, the greatness of knowledge, the wealth of joy and power, which are indicated in the figures of the promise, the crowns of life, and righteousness, and glory, the session on thrones, and this reigning as of kings for ever.

But here, again, little as we know of the fulfilment, the process towards it is even now begun. Even in this present world the true servant of God, in proportion to the reality and simplicity of his servitude, receives also some foretastes of his royalty. Let him, in truth, "endure, seeing Him who is invisible;"[2] and it will bring him a power not his own over and amidst the visible. He will tread, by his Master's strength, calmly and habitually, on besetting sin; he will turn to real flight the alien armies of temptation; he will in some true sense and measure *rule* amongst influences at enmity with his Lord. There is no independence upon earth so strong, and so nobly strong, as that of a Christian who wills wholly to be Christ's servant. There is a power and presence in such a life, be it the poorest and the simplest, which in these days, as in days long gone, can attract more than wonder from those who may least betray the feeling. For what is it but a breath of the victorious martyr-spirit—the spirit in which seventeen centuries ago Polycarp stood invincibly superior before

[1] Rom. v. 17. [2] Heb. xi. 27.

the heathen world and the cruel flame? "Eighty and six years I have served Him; how can I blaspheme my King, who saved me?"

We have heard to-day the invitation to the Table of our Lord. The long succession of Communions lasts and lengthens, each link further from the First Advent, nearer to the Second; all bearing their continuous and unique witness to the reality of both the First and the Second; to the solidity of the past, the present, and the future, of the Christian's faith—to a slain Saviour risen, a risen Saviour present, a present Saviour sure to be revealed again. Let us approach that blessed Table in the simplicity of spiritual desire; bent upon knowing Him and loving Him better who gave Himself for us, and who then bade us thus remember Him, and pledged Himself thus to remember us. And let us not, in discussions about the manner of His Presence with us there, forget that we go thither not least to bind ourselves in renewed allegiance to His service and His Father's. Alas for us if, in our theory of the Sacrament, we forget the moral bond which we dare to link and rivet by our presence at it: "Here we present to Thee ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a holy sacrifice to Thee."

May the *vow* of the Communion gain within us, with each administration, in solemnity, reality, and happiness. May it find us a stage upward on the path to its complete and eternal fulfilment; more willing now to serve our Master and to follow Him; more able now to reign through Him over a treacherous self and a tempting world; in view of that long and happy life where at the length the service will be without one moment's weariness, and the reign without one moment's rebellion, before the throne and before the Lamb.

FULNESS IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

FULNESS IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

Preached in Trinity Church, Cambridge

"But be ye filled with the Spirit."—EPH. v. 18.

THE Greek represented by this clause of the English Version may be somewhat more literally rendered, "But be ye filled in the Spirit," or, perhaps, "But be ye full in the Spirit."[1] The importance of this literalism will appear in the course of our study of this word of God; at present I do but note it, and pass on.

One other verbal detail let us not pass by—the "*but*" which links the clause with the words before it. You see what they are: "*Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but* be ye filled in the Spirit." What is the significance of that link? It is, that it places in co-ordination the two precepts of this one verse, the negative and the positive. It assures us that the one is as extensive in its reference and

[1] The parish pulpit is not the place for the discussion of difficult grammatical questions. I therefore did not, in this Sermon, remark on the absence of the definite article before Πνεύματι, so that the barely literal version is "*in Spirit*." But I did not think this material to the main purport of the text. The reference of the word Πνεῦμα is in any case to the Holy Spirit, not to the human spirit, whether it is a reference to His Person or to His "influence."

purpose as the other. For every member of the Christian community of Ephesus, beyond a question, it was a primary and impartial moral duty *not to be* drunk with wine. Therefore, so the structure of the sentence tells us, it was a primary and impartial duty for those same persons *to be* "full in the Spirit."

We are reminded, then, as we enter on our meditation, that this great precept was not a remote and guarded secret for a select few among the disciples. It was not a peculiar and distinguished experience, which might be the splendid but difficult ambition of one here and another there, who addicted themselves to some higher walk of religious experience, but which could only be admired—and left alone—by the rank and file of believers. It was for all who named the blessed Name. It was for all who "had fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us."[1] It was for every Christian who was a Christian in more than the thin surface of "profession." It was not particularly for the ascetic and the "devotee;" it was for the husband and the wife of the Christian home, for the parents, and the children, and the servants; yes, for all everywhere, in every walk of life where it was possible to be a Christian at all. As all these were called, not as an ambition but as a duty, not to be drunk with wine, so they were all called, not as an ambition but as an open privilege, which was also a most sacred duty, and a most practical one, to be "full in the Spirit."

It is the same here, and at this hour, as then at Ephesus. The commandment is for us, and that without partiality or reserve. Who is there here to-day who is a Christian, even in the lowest grade of that word in its reality? Is it you?

[1] Heb. vi. 18.

Is it you? Then for you is this word of wonder, but also of duty, "Be filled in the Spirit." As truly as it is laid on your conscience to shun the shame of drunkenness, so truly is it laid on that same conscience not to be content with a condition short of this, "Be filled in the Spirit." This sacred fulness, whatever else is to be said about it, is something which every believer in Jesus Christ is to seek, to claim, to find. No one is excused; as if he might say, "I leave these heights to the spiritual mountaineer, while I plough the field of common duty in the plain." No one is excluded; as if he must say, "I would fain stand yonder on the peak above the clouds, where the eternal sun shines always; but I have no strength and skill for the ascent." Would you be ready, indeed, to plough the furrows of duty as your Master's servant, not your own, and to sow them with His seed? Then you must be "full in the Spirit." Do you really long to be, for His sake, and because it is His will, what He means by full? Then you, disciple who know that your right place, as to merit and as to experience, is the lowest room, may be, as you should be, "full in the Spirit."

May the Spirit Himself open our understandings, to see the glorious privilege in its fair and healthful beauty, and its tranquil power, and to recognize in it the duty of our life to-day, and to receive it from the Giver's open hand.

"Be ye full in the Spirit." The phrase suggests a picture, and lends itself easily to material illustration. The disciple is presented in it as a being who is, on the assumption, "*in* the Spirit," but who, being so placed, yet needs this precept to be *filled*. The Holy Ghost surrounds the man as an atmosphere, or let us now say as an

ocean. Not only is He, of course, omnipresent, but up to a certain point He is "around" this Christian in the way of *special grace;* the man would not be a living Christian at all if the Spirit had not taken hold of him, and as it were wafted him into saving union with his Lord, in repenting faith. And doubtless also the man is thus not only "in" the Spirit; the Spirit is "in" him. For this work of the call, the attraction, and the union, how was it done? Not mechanically, but by the Holy One's secret action at the springs of thought and will; by His internal discovery to the man of himself and of his Saviour.

Yet, for this disciple who is "within the Spirit," and within whom the Spirit lives and works, there is yet room for the precept of the Apostle, "Be full in the Spirit."

What does it mean? Illustrations of the spiritual by the material are always to be used with caution, or they may lend themselves to the gravest errors. But what is human language after all if not a mass and maze of material imagery, to be used in the transmission of even the most subtle and vanishing thought? So the aid of illustration not only may but must be used in the spiritual region. Can we not use it here? I see suggested in the words before us, "Be full in the Spirit," a material picture somewhat of this fashion. A vessel—an earthen vessel—is plunged into a crystalline sea; it is "in" the pure flood, surrounded by it at every point. But it carries in it, still unexpelled, a charge of atmospheric air, and it is so placed that, though its mouth is open to the water, this charge of air (of tainted and malarious air, we will suppose) cannot escape. What is the result of the conditions? By dint of compression, indeed, the water makes some inroad on the air, but the air effectually excludes the water from the vessel as a whole.

Not till some way is found for the discharge of the obstructing occupant will there be room in the vessel for "the fulness" of the surrounding sea. In proportion to such discharge will be the influx; as the vessel is evacuated, so will it be filled.

We need caution and reserve, of course, in the spiritual use of our illustration. We are dealing not with mechanical laws, but with the action of that "free Spirit," divine and personal, who "divideth to every man severally as He will."[1] We are dealing with not an inanimate but an animate, conscious, and responsible "earthen vessel."[2] And again, on the other hand, we are treating of the case of a human soul which, while conscious and responsible, is yet as truly as ever "able to do nothing" without Him whose power and presence we have imaged by a watery flood, the tide as of "a sea of glass, mingled with fire." Let these conditions and reserves be all reverently remembered, as they must be if we would not forget some of the most searching, humbling, and healthful truths of grace. Yet they leave "ample room and verge enough" for all that is implied in the pictorial language of our text. The Holy Ghost is free indeed, but He is also true to His revealed ways of grace and power; He is true, among other things, to the promise that where He is sought, *there* shall He be given;[3] "the promise of the Spirit is received *by faith*."[4] And while the soul will assuredly find, sooner or however in the end, that without Him it could neither have come first to Christ, nor ever afterwards have done one thing according to the will of Christ, yet the Spirit's work is carried out through that soul's genuine will. Therefore there is, for the human conscience

[1] 1 Cor. xii. 11. [2] 2 Cor. iv. 7.
[3] Luke xi. 13. [4] Gal. iii. 14.

and the human will, an ever-present reality in the question, "*What wilt thou* that He should do to thee?"[1] Art *thou* willing that He should *fully* have with thee His will?

Look, then, again at the spiritual facts indicated by the imagery of the vessel and the sea. The man has come, through grace, to the foot of the Cross, to peace with God, to living union with Him who is our Life. But in the sequel of things, as he now goes on to live his "life in the flesh,"[2] day by day, certain obstructive matters, whatever they may be, are found remaining in the inner world; and these restrict the free inflow of the blessed life and power which yet has touched him. The human vessel is in the heavenly Stream, but there is that in the vessel which, from the point of view of the man's responsibility and moral choice, keeps the stream out from a part, perhaps from large parts, of the inner life. The grace of God, that is to say, the God of grace in His saving action, is something to the man; perhaps He is much to the man; but ah, how far He is from what He is to be, from what He may be, if His creature is but willing! And the experience of what it is to have it otherwise is an experience which it is the creature's duty, as well as glory, to obtain: "Be not drunk with wine; *but be ye, in the Spirit, full.*"

How shall this thing be? The imagery of the Apostle's words, which I have attempted to develop in illustration, indicates the essentials of the answer. It is for the Holy One, purely by and of Himself, to fill the living vessel. It is for the living vessel, not of and by itself, *yet itself*, to accept that filling, by a removal of obstructing matter, an evacuation of the subtle but obstinate somewhat that has been the barrier to the heavenly filling.

[1] Mark x. 51. [2] Gal. ii. 20.

The man is called, at the centre and heart of his condition, not to exhausting efforts, but to a profound submission; not to an arduous ascent as of difficult heights, but to a willingness to let Another take full hold of him, and bear him up. He is called not to conquer, first, but first internally to yield. He is not to earn a hoard of buried treasure, won by weary spiritual toil; he is to drop from his hands the dross and rubbish which makes it impossible for those same hands to hold the golden store which the most generous of all Givers stands ready, stands waiting, to place within them.

My brethren, the matter is as practical as possible. Here is a commandment—not merely a counsel, but a commandment—of perfection. We have remembered, somewhat in the abstract, how its fulfilment is to be compassed. What does it mean, when we translate the abstract into the concrete, the principle into life, into the life of ourselves to-day? Are we, in some hour of deeper recollection, constrained to lament that whatever is intended by spiritual Fulness, it is scarcely likely to find its counterpart in our experience? that too often, on the other hand, we "are straitened in ourselves"?[1] that a sense of religious weariness and disappointment is not unknown to us? that the things which belong to our heavenly Master are not quite those which fill us? that ours is not quite a glad conscious life, stirring in the depths, and expressed spontaneously upon the surface; the heart's abundance speaking through the lips, and not the lips only, but the temper, the tone, of an habitual faith, and hope, and love? Are we saddened by the confession to ourselves

[1] 2 Cor. vi. 12.

that the fulness and pressure of external labour and intercourse find no adequate response in an inward upspringing fulness of divine communion, such as beyond all other things strengthens the will by leaving a deep calm around it, and clears the judgment by a wonderful disencumbrance of anxieties from the heart? Is the fountain low beneath its brim, whereas the Master of old, sitting by the Syrian well, promised to His disciple that the water He would give should be "in him, a well of water, springing up unto eternal life"?[1]

If the man is not mournfully content with his regrets over such a confession,—if he recognizes that such a state is not according to the will of God, who enjoins the opposite,—what shall he do? I dare to say (always supposing that the consciousness of need is honest, and is healthy,) that he will do well to ask, in the daylight of the presence of our Lord and Friend, whether there is not something which obstructs, and which it is for the man, by resigning, to remove. We look up, and appeal for showers to what we think a rainless heaven. Perhaps the water is all the while beneath our feet, but, because of the stones and dust which we have heaped upon it, it cannot rise. "Take ye away the stones;" as when the Roman workmen, not many years ago, digging in the long-buried Forum, literally unearthed the *Aqua Virgo*, imprisoned for ages in the soil; and lo, the stream burst forth into a sudden lake, strong and living as in the days of consuls and of kings.

What are the stones, what is the *débris*, for this man's life, or for the other's? (For we have passed for a while from the simile of the immersed vessel to the simile of the hidden

[1] John iv. 14.

and forgotten spring.) Is it some cherished idol of the soul, whose material—whatever its shape—is sure to be, after all, the love of self? Is it a selfish grasp upon something which we forget is not our own, for *we* are not our own? Is it a self-regarding estimate and use of position, of reputation, of influence, of time, of material possessions? Long ago a great preacher, visiting a certain town with his Master's message, was asked to bring spiritual consolation, if he could, to a Christian woman, weary and heavy laden with a sense of spiritual drought and overhanging gloom. He presented to her mind the old but eternally new facts of our Redemption; the Incarnate Lord, the all-propitiating blood, the love of the Spirit, the peace of grace, the hope of glory. All was acknowledged as divinely true, but all was in vain; the spiritual counsellor retired baffled and in sadness. But afterwards he learnt that there was a stone upon the mouth of the well of life within that soul, and a stone heavy with the gold of earthly wealth. The troubled disciple had great possessions, and alas, was parsimonious to an extreme in the use of them, for others and for the Lord.

In lives innumerable that obstruction is little to be feared; the weight and snare of this life's gold is not for them. Aye, and for many a life which *has* that weight upon it, there is, thank God, no need to suspect that coin clogs the fountain's mouth; the large and cheerful giving which God loveth is in action there. But there are other kinds and qualities of interior obstacle than that of love of money. There is the cherished grievance; there is the jealously guarded right; there is the secret love of receiving honour from man; there is the spending upon a selfish mental luxury the intellectual faculties and acqui-

sitions which are only rightly held and used when it is "no longer to ourselves, but to Him who died for us and rose again."[1]

All too often, in the Christian life, where there is complaint of spiritual shallowness and drought, there lies in the recesses of the soul some unsettled controversy, unsettled between the man and his God; something undone, something indulged, something curtained off from the direct gaze of even the inward eye, yet which it owns to be there by not looking, if it can help it, in that direction.

If so, we will not waste the moments on regret. "Take ye away the stone," and the holy fountain will flow, with no assistance of our hydraulic enginery. Let "the earthen vessel," in the self-surrender made possible by the sight of Christ, give release to the imprisoned and imprisoning air; and no pressure on its part will be needed to let in the waters of the Pacific Sea of God.

For, indeed, that sea, with all its eternal strength, is pacific. To be indeed filled with the Spirit, to be indeed, in the language of our Eucharistic prayer, "full-filled with His grace and heavenly benediction," is not—if we read the Scripture portrait of "the spiritual man" aright—to become the restless visionary, the importunate enthusiast, the advertiser of the saintliness of self. It is the condition of a life which has found the deep but open secret of an honest humbleness, of a practical serviceableness, of a sympathetic insight into the griefs and into the joys of others; a life which will, in a depth of meaning which the pagan dramatist could not know, "think nothing human alien" from its human heart. But then in that heart will habitually spring and flow a well and stream more than

[1] 2 Cor. v. 15.

human. In that life, not here and there an isolated part, but the thing all through, the will, the thought, the affections, will be full of the Holy Ghost, evidencing His full presence by the internal fact, certain to the man's deepest self, that Jesus Christ is all in all for repose, and purity, and power.

Whatever the allotted range of that life and its sphere of influence, whether the diameter is measured by an empire, or by a cottage, it will be a life whose blessed issues will overflow for God, for Christ, for man. "Out of him," saith the Lord, "shall flow rivers of living water; and this spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive."[1] And has it not been truly said that all highest and deepest work for God is done by overflow, by an influence that is an effluence, the outcome of a fulness of Him within?

Behold, then, the Holy of Holies of the Christian life. It is veiled; but He who died for us has rent the veil, from the top to the bottom, that we may enter in. It is open for the weakest, for the most fatigued, for the most disappointed, who will stoop yet lower than weakness and weariness, that they may conquer; falling out of self at the feet of Christ, "yielding themselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and their members as instruments of righteousness unto God."[2]

"Lord, we ask it, hardly knowing
What this wondrous gift may be;
Yet fulfil to overflowing;
Thy great meaning let us see."

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[1] John vii. 38, 39. [2] Rom. vi. 13.

A VESSEL UNTO HONOUR

A VESSEL UNTO HONOUR

Preached in the University Church, Cambridge

"If a man purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work."—2 TIM. ii. 21.

ST PAUL is giving his dying counsels to his dear Timotheus, dictating them, probably, to Luke, in the Roman dungeon from which he was to be released only for his martyrdom. As ever, as in his earliest discourses and Epistles, so here, while the topics are many, the topic is Christ; Christ in His personal and saving glory, and the relation of believing man to Him. On the verge of the eternal state, he writes as practically as possible on the holy theme. He leaves behind him not a rhapsodical farewell, but a grave, tender, last reminder to his beloved disciple how to believe aright in the unchangeable Saviour, and how to serve that Saviour's purposes day by day in trial and in duty.

The man who has found Christ, and is found in Him, is not the man to be disturbed, certainly not the man to be bewildered, in the prospect of death. He belongs already to both worlds, belonging to Him to whom they both belong. For him, the things seen and temporal are just the present field of his Master's work, and the things

unseen and eternal are but the extension of that vast field into another climate, but under the same Owner, and lighted by the same Sun.

So the dying Apostle is full of the thought of his younger fellow-labourer's continued labour. He says nothing about Timotheus' death, and the glories that should follow; it is all about Timotheus' life and work, and how best he should do, while yet in the body, the work appointed by his Lord.

In the present passage this is brought home to the reader by the imagery of a house, with its furniture and utensils. "In a great house there are vessels of gold and silver, and vessels of wood and earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour." The Church Visible is the great House; and every member of it, every one who is registered under the Christian name, is in some sense a vessel, a σκεῦος, in it, and used for some purpose by the Master of it. But the qualities and uses of the vessels immensely vary; and there are those which are used only for purposes of dishonour. That is to say—for the whole context makes us sure of this—they are used not for purposes obscure and humble, but for purposes conditioned by evil; purposes, for example, of the warning, of the beacon. Such a vessel, in the elder days, was a Gehazi; such vessels, later, were a Judas, an Ananias, a Demas, and in this present passage, a Hymenæus and a Philetus. The Master found them in "the great house," in the outward Church, and He used them there; but He used them for their own dishonour, while yet it was His use.

How, then, as I am in any case a vessel, a vessel in the great house, shall I be a vessel unto honour? And what does 'a vessel unto honour" mean?

The last question must be answered first, and it is answered for us in the context: "A vessel unto honour, sanctified and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work;" or, to render the Greek somewhat more precisely, "sanctified, hallowed, set apart, *so as to be usable* for the Master." The vessel which is hallowed so as to be usable by Him, *that* is the vessel unto honour. Its capacity may be large or small. Its workmanship may be homely or elaborately magnificent. It may be a casket for celestial gems; it may be a censer for spiritual incense; it may be a box of holy oil, very precious; it may be the golden vase fit to be the basin of a glorious fountain; it may be a plain silver cup of cold water, to be carried to some solitary disciple. But all these differences are accidents. The essence of the matter is that the thing, large or small, is hallowed into usableness, not for its own enterprises or ambitions, not with a view to its own attainment of "some great thing to do, or secret thing to know," but into usableness for the Master (*ἡγιασμένον εὔχρηστον τῷ Δεσπότῃ*). It is brought into a condition in which Another can take it gladly up, and carry it where He pleases, and freely apply it to His chosen, and pleasant, and perfect ends. He may employ it in the presence of a multitude, lifting it to His lips in some great hour of festival and triumph. He may use it all alone, altogether for His own hand and eyes, in the shadows of His own innermost chamber. But is it ready to the Master's hand? Is it handy for the Master's use? Is it hallowed to the Master's ends? Then it is a vessel unto honour.

Paul was a vessel unto honour, when he was altogether given up to the Lord Jesus, and when Jesus used him to bear His Name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the

people of Israel, and to be the vehicle of the inspiring Spirit, writing for our learning those oracles which now fill one quarter of the New Testament. And Augustine was a vessel unto honour, when he too was altogether the Lord's, and the Lord took him up, with his surpassing gifts of intellect and soul, and used him to defend the truth of His grace all over Western Christendom, and to give a direction to Christian thought, doctrinal and mystical, which is felt and followed to this moment. But so also was Luke a vessel unto honour, when he sat by Paul's side in the deep dungeon at Rome, in the days of the Neronian terror, and gave himself up to serve and console that one saint in his dark hour. And so was Monnica a vessel unto honour, when she "lived Christ" before her unsympathetic husband, and before her wilful son, with his genius and his vice, and poured out her prayer for him, and refused to give him up, and died at last happy in his arms, not because he was to be a great man for all time, and she was his mother, but because he was a Christian, and she should meet him in glory.

The great Christian thinker who moves modern Christendom in right directions for the Lord, if he does it for the Lord indeed, is a vessel unto honour. The great Christian missionary is a vessel unto honour, as he evangelizes or educates for Christ a tribe, a province, a nation. And so is the great Christian philanthropist, as he is used by the Master's hand to effect a change which can never be reversed in the condition of the West Indian slave, or of the child of the English factory. But so too is the much-burthened mother a vessel unto honour, whose whole province of influence, so far as she knows it, or cares for it, is the home where she labours and also prays without ceasing, spending her whole self upon her little circle for their earthly and

heavenly blessing, while she draws into that self continually the power of the indwelling Christ who moulds her into what she is. And the Christian friend is a vessel unto honour, who finds himself called to some obscure but difficult task of personal influence, and yields himself for it into the Master's hands. He does nothing which will ever be famous here below. Not even an obituary paragraph will ever be written by way of his biography. All he does is to love another's soul; to lay himself, in the name of Jesus, alongside another's life, in the contact and closeness of sympathy, of example, of self-forgetful help. Even the man he aids, instructs, gladdens, establishes, perhaps rescues, will never know a tenth part of what it all was to the worker; only the Master who has been holding him all the while, and administering eternal life through him, knows all it has meant to the living vessel, all the tax and weariness of the yet beloved operation. That man in his deep and most willing obscurity is a vessel unto honour; his metal is the gold of the heavenly Ophir; he shines bright and beautiful to the Master, in the Master's hands, and at His lips.

"*A vessel unto honour.*" It is a term glorious with that rare honour which cometh from God only,[1] and which falls impartially, where it falls at all, upon the greatest and the least, as man counts great and little. The little child, just knowing that "Jesus loves me," and made sweet in temper and unmindful of self by Him, is a vessel unto honour; and the maidservant "who sweeps the room as for His laws;" and the boy at school who, while his youth is strong within him, denies self for Christ, manly but before all things

[1] John v. 44.

godly, not ashamed of His name, because it is the Master's name, and he is in the Master's hand.

"*A vessel unto honour.*" The imagery of the vessel, the σκεῦος, is pregnant with suggestion and instruction. A vessel is a thing which is altogether not its own. Its idea is that it is a thing for use, for the use of an agent who is not itself. It originates nothing; it only carries, conveys, transmits. It is not its own motor; it is carried; it is for a hand which is not itself to lift, to grasp, to bear away and about, where it would and where it would not. It is doubly not its own; it carries what is not itself, the wine, or the water, for the sake of which it is employed; and it is carried by what is not itself, the Possessor who may do what He will with His own, and who knows what the vessel does not know—His plan and aim in all the carrying.

And if, as perhaps we may do, we vary the rendering of σκεῦος, and let it mean not only the cup, the vase, but the implement, the instrument—the workman's chisel, the ploughman's share, the gardener's spade—the import of the metaphor is just the same. The thing is still a thing whose value is in its use, and which has no use apart from the hand that holds it, and wields it, and which is not itself.

And again, whether we take the metaphor to be the vessel, or to be the tool, there is a pregnant fitness in the account here given of its right condition; that it, "being hallowed into usableness for the Master," is also, as such, "prepared unto every good work." For is not *preparedness* for work, as well as capacity for it, a necessary thing in the right condition of tool, or of vessel? The material of the cup may be perfect—pure silver, or gold, or crystal. But let two such cups stand on the table, one clean and the other

foul, and into which will the master pour the water or the wine? The tool may be made of the best steel of the English forge; but let two such chisels lie before the carpenter, and one be blunt and rusted, and the other newly set and ground, and which will he take up at the moment, as separated and "prepared" for his work? Just so it is with the vessels of the great House, with the tools of the great Artificer, which are the souls that He has redeemed for His own possession. Are they of the right stuff? Are they, indeed, new creations? Good; but are they also ready? Alas, there is such a thing in the spiritual sphere as a foulness which makes even the water of life, so transmitted, not fit to drink; and a rust, the miserable product of unwatchful hours in which the soul's surrender is withdrawn, which makes the tool such that the Master does not care to cut His devices with it. There is such a thing as the genuine Christian found quite unready, because found out of communion with Christ, and in himself. Let not that man think that he shall be usable for the Lord.

"*He shall be a vessel unto honour.*" Let us return upon this strong and positive promise. It is a word of God; it means what it says. "*He shall be.*" Here, then, is no unattainable precipice, which aspiration may survey, but cannot climb. It is not, "Oh that he might be!" "Oh that he ever were!" Nay, "*He shall be.*"

For the Christian man, who indeed knows whom he has believed, is there not here a stimulus to the attention and expectation of the soul, and to the most joyful of its hopes? No one who has ever, in the Apostle's wonderful phrase, "learned Christ,"[1] needs to be reminded *by argu-*

[1] Eph. iv. 20.

ment that his blessed *raison d'être*, as he is a man saved by grace, and united to his Saviour, is that he is now His property, for His use. In the sight of his King he has apprehended, as by an intuition, that the honour that comes from God is above all things the honour of being serviceable to Him. If we could know this day who, in all the Christian world, is most truly ready for the Master's use, be that use what it may, and ready as a vessel is ready, ready to be carried and to carry, not for itself, nor of itself, but for its Bearer, and filled with what He would have it bear—then we should know the most honourable, the most honoured Christian in the world. But we need not play with such a competitive conjecture; it is enough for us to remember that every Christian exists as such for the use of Christ, and that in proportion to his sight of Christ will be his insight into the bliss of being used by Christ as vessel is used by Master, as σκεῦος is used by Δεσπότης, by absolute Owner, who has both bought it and wrought it for Himself. "Henceforth," such is the deep unalterable motto of the life that is at all as God would have it be—"henceforth not unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them, and rose again."

"*He shall be.*" *How* shall he be? What are the conditions to the realization, to the change of the promise into fact?

They are very simply given by St Paul, in the first clause that we have read: "*If a man purge himself from these.*" It would be interesting to ask more precisely what, or who, are meant by "*these*," but it is not necessary for our purpose here. We remember that the Apostle has been speaking of deluded and deluding teachers, whose theories, speciously transcendental, perhaps, in shape and

setting, yet somehow made light of sin. And the inner and permanent import of the words accordingly comes to this; "If a man separate himself from sin."

Does this seem at once trite—and impossible? Surely not so, if we remember its practical context, and the promises of the Gospel which lie behind it. The context is the vessel, the Master, separation to His use, readiness for His work. And the sin which besets, and opposes, and contradicts that condition is the sin of self-seeking in the Master's house, the sin of unwillingness to be a vessel ready to His hand, the hopeless attempt to combine a life after the flesh, that is to say, unto ourselves, with a life after the Spirit. And to the man who has come to Christ, and is joined to Him, there is given in Christ a divine power to negative that sin. That man carries about him, whether he yet knows it or not, dominion over that sin, as Bunyan's Pilgrim carried the key of Doubting Castle in his bosom, though he had forgotten. It is given to the Christian, that is, to the sinful man who gives himself to Christ, to oppose to the deep sinfulness of the self-ful life not his will only, but his Lord; not "a better self," but the Son of God, who gave Himself for him, and who now lives in him.

> "Not me the dark foe fears at all,
> But hid in Thee I take the field;
> Now at my feet the mighty fall,
> For Thou hast bid them yield."

Jesus Christ is his "Strength" and his "Hope;" and on Him he casts this great spiritual care. In His Name he bids Him take possession of His own purchased property. In His Name he says, and means it, "Lord and Master,

I am not my own, but Thine; not only in the sense of Thy rights, but in that of my whole soul's glad consent in Thee."

It is a humble, a simple, self-surrender which is in question. "Yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God."[1] And what is yielded, He receives, to have and to hold, from this time forward, and to use it for Himself.

Such self-surrender is but the other side of a sight of the blessed Master, the Good-Man of the great House. He, in His eternal personal beauty, the Son in the bosom of the Father, stooped into indissoluble union with our nature, purchased our souls for Himself with His most holy blood-shedding, rose again because of our justification, lives for evermore, on the throne of heaven, and on the throne of His disciple's heart, and shall come again in glory, to our glory and His own. In Christ, not in ourselves, the grace of self-surrender, like all grace, is found. Man loses himself in humbly receiving his Redeemer to be his all. It is no achievement, giving subtle food to spiritual pride—which is the contradiction and death of the honour which Christ gives. It is the reception, in an empty hand, of the gift of heart-union with the Giver.

The disciple thus surrendered shall be a vessel unto honour. He shall be, with no reserve and peradventure, a vessel hallowed to the Master's use. The Master shall fill him, shall carry him, shall employ him. And blessed for ever is that mother's son who is held by that right hand, for the uses of that heart of eternal love.

[1] Rom. vi. 13.

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